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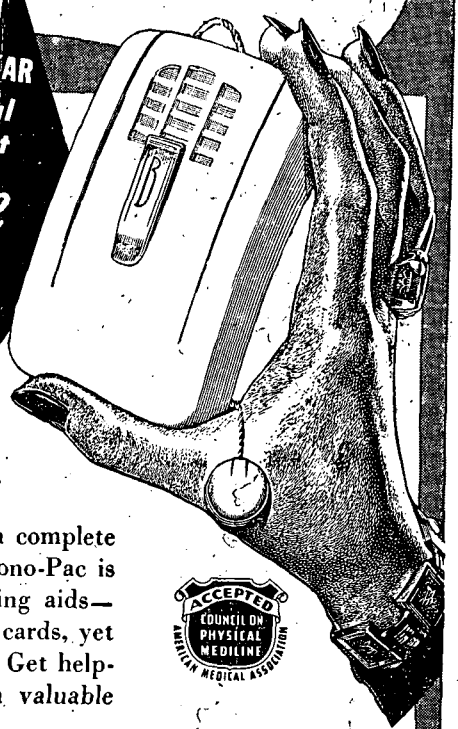

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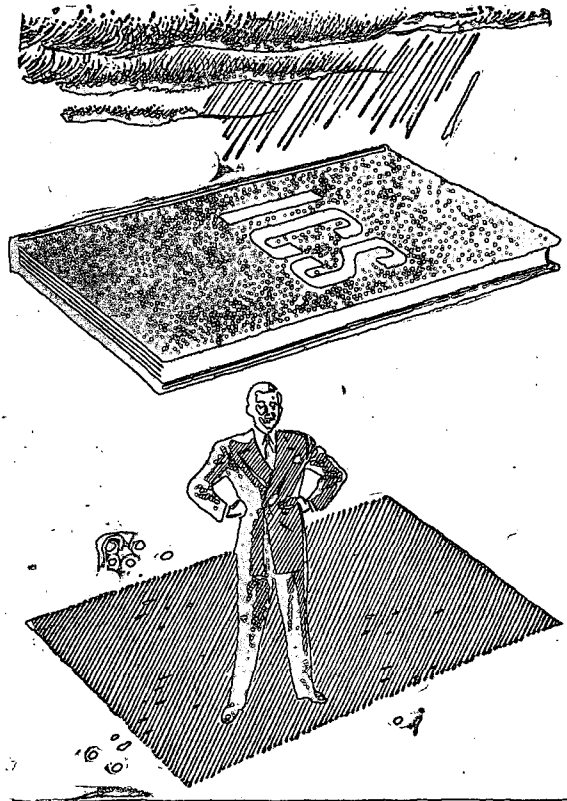

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Cover Painting by Earle Bergey—Illustrating "Lord of the Storm"

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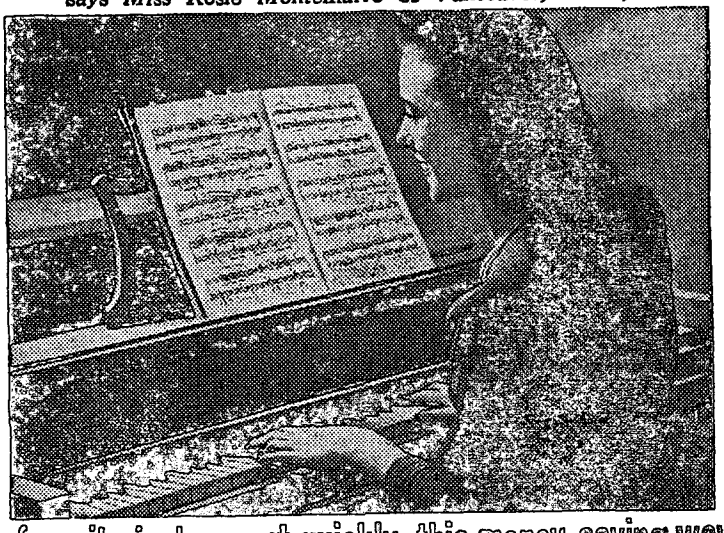

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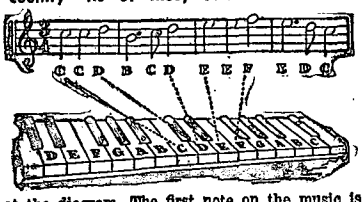

Look at the diagram. The first note on the music is "C." Follow the dotted line to the keyboard and locate "C" on the piano. Find the other notes the same way. Now strike the notes as indicated and you'll be playing the melody of that famous patriotic hymn, "America." Easy as A-B-C, isn't it?

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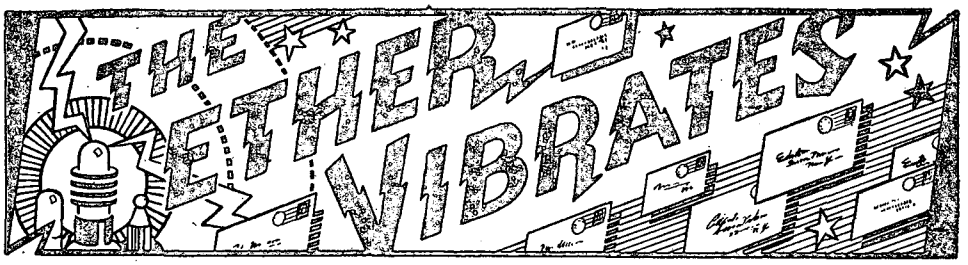

WITH giant new observatories, with V-2 rockets soaring to unprecedented heights of a hundred miles and more, with radar bouncing blithely off the moon, man seems to have turned his imagination toward travel to the stars—or at any rate the nearby planets.

With the propulsive power already in sight and the probably deadly radiations of space under laboratory testing, some scientists and their followers are tossing hundreds of thousands, yes millions of miles around on conversation as if such distances were no greater barriers than the Atlantic Ocean of pre-Columbian days.

Telephone numbers always did sound good over a dinner table and for all any of us knows they may, within decades, be taking such trips. We may even be taking them ourself.

Surface to Center

But there is a sobering reverse side to the picture. It is our hunch that long after man has taken to the spaceways he will still be stopped cold by a comparatively hop-skip-and-jump distance of approximately four thousand miles—the distance from the surface to the center of his own home globe.

They promise to be just about the toughest four thousand miles that will ever stand in his way. So far he has yet to travel ten of them. And until he goes a lot further his knowledge of the world he walks on and rides on and sails or flies over promises to remain as theoretical as it is today.

The actions and effects of those terrifying visitations from below, volcanic eruptions, are pretty well understood and can even be foretold today. But the actual causes of such tremendous pressures as that which caused the thunderclap of Krakatoa are still objects of scientific search. Can mere pressure of geological faults generate such tremendous heat—or does it stem from some deeper source? How is man going to find out for certain until he penetrates far more deeply?

What actually caused the Ice Ages which have visited Terra so many times over a period of millions of years? Were they caused by fluctuations in the earth's temperature or by extra-Tellurian influences? What caused the temperate and tropic ages between these world-wide winters—such as the increasingly warm age in which we are now living?

Scientists are working on these problems as they have worked for generations, but it is our guess that the final answers, negative or otherwise, can only be found by first-hand study of what lies beneath us.

Few people know that, close to the great Mt. Wilson observatory is a U.S. Government Geological Station. It is situated almost directly atop the major geological fault which is responsible for the bulk of West Coast earthquakes. So men *are* looking down as well as up. But not, alas, as far.

Floating Continent

Theories are legion and many of them well supported by responsible scientific minds. There is the floating continent theory, which presupposes that the major land masses of Earth were once a single heartland and are even now drifting slowly across the surface of the globe.

Best substantiation of this theory lies in the shape of the continents themselves, which fits the bulge of western Africa into the Caribbean and shows the remnants of other fits. But what about Antarctica? And what is going to happen when eastern Asia and Western America meet? They'll have to do a lot of swinging around to make it.

The Underworld of Mythology

The idea of life below the earth's surface dates back to the Underworld of ancient mythology and its more recent hellish counterpart. A man named Symms besought Congress more than a century ago for funds to finance an expedition to either Pole, where he claimed were open entrances to the interior of the globe—an interior he alleged was made up of concentric spheres, some of them inhabited.

Jules Verne, in his "Journey to the Center of the Earth," ingeniously developed a semi-plausible underworld peopled with prehistoric giants, mammoths and even plesio-

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sauri and sea serpents. He was a little hazy about the sun which provided illumination to his gigantic underground cavern (reached through the crater of an extinct volcano on Iceland) and had his voyagers escape by riding the crest of an lava discharge through the crater of Stromboli in the Mediterranean.

It may not have been ultra-scientific, even for the era in which it was written, but it was exciting and lots of fun—and for all that is known today as plausible as any other theory. Man may reach the stars or at any rate Venus or Mars within the lifetime of men living today. But we'll lay odds no one yet born will see him really penetrate the crust of his home planet.

The Navy's Super-Submarines

In secondary connection with this theme, the $30,000,000 given the Navy by Congress to construct a pair of super-submarines has points of interest. While half of this sum is not much in comparison with the hundred million or more needed to build and equip a modern battleship or carrier, these will be the largest and most novel undersea vessels ever constructed.

Thanks to wartime discoveries, submarines can now stay underwater for indefinite periods, manufacturing their own air as they go. Thanks to radar, they can tell pretty much where they are going without the aid of a periscope. One of them may travel around the world without surfacing.

If only they could be fitted with plexiglas windows, powerful searchlights and scientific laboratories instead of the tools of war, they would beat Dr. Beebe's bathosphere all hollow for underseas observation. They might even be able to explore ocean bottoms for the traces of lost continents which have gripped the imagination of humanity since ancient times.

At least they could match the cruise of Captain Nemo's *Nautilus*. Actually, save for the luxury fittings, many submarines already have. The Narwhal, one of our older ships of this type, is a hundred feet longer than Jules Verne's prophetic vessel. And these new ones will be larger still.

We seem to keep coming back to Jules Verne. But how can he be avoided in any article dealing with scientific prophecy. He thought of just about everything—and what he failed to think of H. G. Wells did.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

THE full length novel in the September STARTLING STORIES goes to Murray Leinster and THE MAN IN THE IRON

[*Turn page*]

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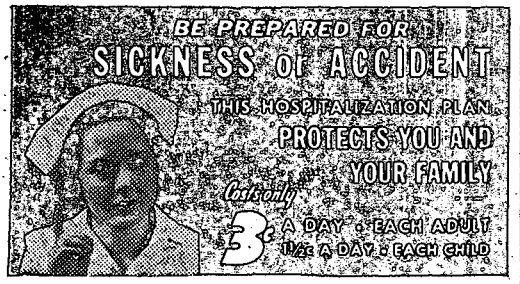

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CAP, a not-too-cheerful prophecy of what conceivably could be the shape of things to come.

The novel is in large measure the story of Jim Hunt, scientist of a future America which has found it inadvisable to permit scientific research in any direction which might menace the security of humanity. Jim, chafing at such dogmatic restrictions, has delved into lines deemed dangerous and exiled to a camp for other perilous putterers like himself.

Escaping from the plane which is taking him to custody, Jim parachutes by night into a deep backwoods region—to find already on Earth a deadlier peril than the well-meaning fuddy-duddies in charge of government had ever had the imagination to conceive.

Jim runs head-on into an invasion from space, one so subtle and so deadly that it threatens to overcome the entire country and, ultimately, the world, before unwarned humanity is even aware of the danger menacing it. This is the story of an epic battle in which the stakes are so vast and the odds so tremendous that it has seldom been matched in the history of science fiction.

A fine old favorite, THROUGH THE PURPLE CLOUD, by Jack Williamson, occupies the Hall of Fame spot—giving a vivid picture of what may some day happen to almost any passenger plane that has the bad luck to get caught in this particular space warp. A classic of wide repute which none of you will want to miss.

The usual array of short stories will be among those present, as will your editor with this department and the Review of the Amateur Magazines—fanzines to you. It should be an excellent issue!

ETHERGRAMS

HAVING thus laid our wares on the table, let's go to the mail sack, which is bulging more than ever (for which thanks, all of you) and therefore presents even more than the usual problems of selection and trimming to fit.

We have, we hope, attained a happy medium of cutting after overdoing it a few issues back. The increased volume of reader correspondence makes some use of the clippers absolutely necessary.

But receiving more letters has also increased our ability to indulge in some picking and choosing. Mind you, no more than ever do we object to criticism when it is amusing or makes sense constructive or otherwise. But crank letters or letters which simply call

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SS lousy without reason will have small chance of appearing in print.

Puns and poetry and the oblique uppercut to the jaw don't phaze us—we can always repay in kind—with compound interest. And, as always, we are on the lookout for controversial subjects and any sort of query or statement which promises to foment an honest and interesting difference of opinion.

And speaking of puns, our opening letter tees off right by the clubhouse.

REWARD
by R. E. Ward

Dear Editor: You have been a very good boy; been doing a fine job of editing. In return, you shall have your—REWard—get it? R. E. Ward—reward. From now on it's my pseudonym, thanks to the wit of John Van Couvering, who thought it up for me. But now to the May issue.

Of course, Hank Kuttner takes first again with another "scientifantasy". It seems STF is changing a little lately—as Chad Oliver said not long ago. Our thundering space epics are slowly dwindling, without doubt. If that's the way it is to be, that's fine as far as I'm concerned. Wonderful;—but I still look back on the days of '38-9, '40-1-2 with a vague nostalgia. . . .

But back to the business at hand, honors go to Hank Kuttner for "Lands of the Earthquake." Hank probably has more pen-names than anyone in the business, but yet he turns out consistently excellent work.

Bravo! Heinlein is back and *Startling's* got him! You realize of course, what an honor that is! I only regret that the story wasn't longer.

Hold on here—I just can't place such a grand story as "Disc-Men of Jupiter" below a short-short. Wellman, though way down the list in my favorites, is a SUPERB author, and he deserves all the honors I can give him. I particularly like MWW's way of starting a story—it makes one hang on until he's finished the yarn.

In last place—John Russell Fearn's "The Arbiter." But merely because the others were so good. This was a wonderful short, and more like it would be desirable. I always did have a weakness for stories about machines. . . .

A quick summary of the Art: Cover, all right, but I wish Bergey would tone down the action a bit. Otherwise QS. Marchioni's work for the novel stank. I was looking through my back numbers of TWS yesterday, and I saw some illustrations by Marchioni that were just as good as many of Paul's or Finlay's! He certainly has changed his style, and for the worse, I'd say. The rest was so-so, except Morey's on pages 70-71, which was excellent—the best in the ish by far.

See here! You tell me I am wrong about TWS and its anniversary. Then why did you celebrate its tenth birthday in '39, if, as you say, it was born in '36? Ha, you're wrong.—*428 Main Street, El Segundo, California.*

About the anniversary—begging your humble pardon, we are *not* wrong. The 1939 anniversary was a ten-year-deal all right, but it celebrated the first decade dating from the opening issue of WONDER STORIES, and including all issues of TWS to that date.

Get down on your knees, bub, and fast.

FLIGHT OF ADMAGENATION
by Rick Sneary

Dear Editor: Just a couple words on the May SS. And stuff there in. Another zine has already sayed what I think of the cover. "Bergey has drawn a invisible space-suted heroin."

A large bunch of California's best roses to Mr. Kuttner for LAND OF THE EARTHQUAKE. It was extry

(Continued on page 96)

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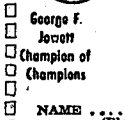

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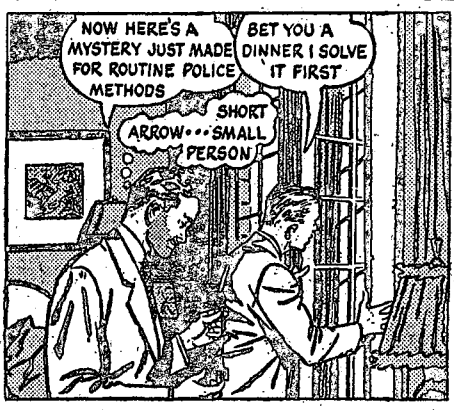
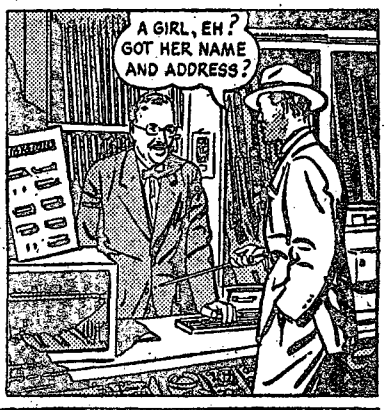
INSPECTOR MOON WON HIS BET AND THEN . . .

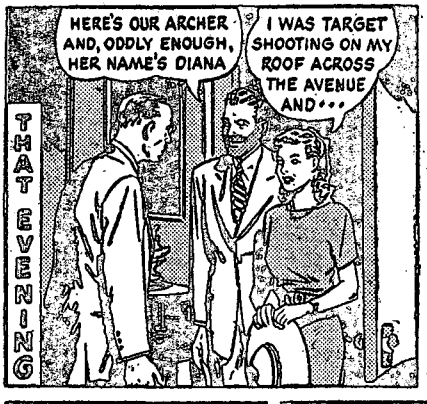
IN A LOFTY NEW YORK APARTMENT, DETECTIVE INSPECTOR JIM MOON AND A MYSTERY WRITER, H.H. KYNE, ARGUE OVER THE PLAUSIBILITY OF THE LATTER'S NEWEST "WHO DONE IT" WHEN . . .



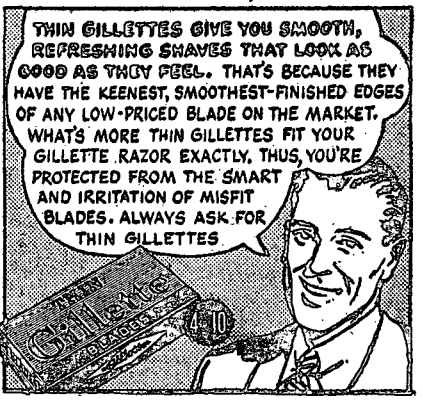
. . . AND SO, WHILE AUTHOR KYNE TRIES ARM-CHAIR DEDUCTION TO FIND THE MYSTERIOUS ARCHER, INSPECTOR MOON VISITS SPORTING GOODS STORES



THAT EVENING



JUST IMAGINE! ME THE MAIN CHARACTER IN A REAL MYSTERY!
YES, AND WITH A DASH OF ROMANCE, IT'LL MAKE A GOOD YARN
HE'S WONDERFUL LOOKING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THIN Gillette
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Havers rode arrogantly erect in the saddle. (CHAP. V)

LORD OF THE STORM

By KEITH HAMMOND

Thunder and lightning, storm and flood—these are the weapons of Mart Havers as he champions humanity in its epochal struggle against evil tyranny and destruction!

CHAPTER I

A New Leader Is Born

HAVERSHAM stared toward the enormous white moonlit tower of the hospital. Fine beads of sweat showed on his pale face. There was a distant clatter of hoofs, and he sank back against the padded cushions of the autocar until the guardsman had cantered past, crimson cloak flaring, golden helmet bright under its tossing plume.

The steel-worker twisted a fold of his own russet cloak between bony fingers.

"I'd kill him first," he said, under his breath. "If I thought my son would grow up to be one of those strutting devils—"

A NOVEL OF THE FUTURE

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"Easy, John," said the man beside him. "Easy! Our plans are made."

Haversham looked again at the hospital. He was younger than his companion, but he looked older. His gaunt face was harsh and fanatical.

"Plans!" he said. "It's action we need!"

"Not yet."

"When? Years, Kennard? Centuries?"

"Maybe," said the quiet voice, and Kennard La Boucherie, bulky and awkward-seeming as a mastodon in his many-tiered cape, drummed thick fingers on the autocar's guidestick.

All of the man's adroitness lay in his hands, fat white shapeless gloves whose appearance lied. La Boucherie could handle a scalpel or a microscope with equal ease, as he could use a smash-gun or tighten those deceptively pulpy fingers around an enemy's throat.

A Cromwellian's, for preference.

"I know," he said. "This is the hardest part, waiting. You're sure about Margot?"

"She won't talk."

"Even under the anesthetic?"

"She doesn't know anything," Haversham snapped, giving his cloak another savage twist. "Not about me—us—the Freemen."

La Boucherie put a heavy hand on the man's knee in warning. The steel-worker caught his breath.

"They're not gods," he protested. "Are you beginning to believe your own fables?"

"Fables?" Above the great bulk of La Boucherie's body his face looked like a smiling skull when that thin smirk drew up his lips. "Who says they're fables? I have a precedent for speaking in parables. You can't tell the plain truth to men like mine, John. It *is* true that the Cromwellians have scientific powers that are almost godlike.

> Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?
>
> Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?
>
> Canst thou send lightnings?
>
> Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. . . .
>
> *The Book of Job*

And how did they get them in the first place?"

"I know." Haversham gestured toward the hospital, above its terrace of gardens. "We'd have a finger in powers like that, if they didn't skim off the cream of the generations, straight from the cradle. If they ever left us any leaders!"

"They never will. Trust them." La Boucherie pulled off his feathered hat and rubbed the crease its band had left across his forehead. His voice was tired. "We have no leaders left. All we have are the little men who can't understand, sometimes, unless you speak in parables. Fables. They're not so far from the truth at that, John. And we've got to be careful, if we expect to get away with this."

"We'll get away with it. My son's one baby who won't grow up into a Cromwellian Leader."

He half-drew the deadly bulk of a smash-gun from under his arm. La Boucherie snarled a command.

"Put that back! You fool!"

THE rhythm of hoofbeats sounded again. Haversham let his hand fall from the weapon.

La Boucherie's little eyes gleamed with reluctant appreciation of the approaching horseman's uniform, even as suspicion tightened all the muscles in his gross bulk. But the Guardsman in crimson and gold braid cantered on with scarcely a glance at the common men in the common autocar. His helmet canted at a rakish angle above one eye, his cloak billowing over the horse's black, gleaming rump, he rode past—and La Boucherie, a dandy even in this era of dandies, envied him that crimson and gold, that gorgeous mount waxed to a sheen like water.

Haversham had no such feelings. His thoughts were all with his new-born son in the great hospital above them. He stared at La Boucherie, and jerked his head toward the retreating guardsman. "Sometimes I think you envy those peacocks," he said.

"I might have been one of them myself," the big man said slowly. "I might have been a—Leader." The skull showed plainly behind the gross mask of fat, and a vicious, deadly malignance glittered in La Boucherie's eyes. "But I'm not. And I never will be, now."

Haversham scarcely heard. "My son—they won't get him. He's not going into a Leader Creche and work for justice all his life.

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A second Deluge, a new Ice Age was in the making (CHAP. XVI)

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Justice! A hundred years ago, maybe, but not now."

"They may not want your son," La Boucherie said.

"They will. The preliminary mental tests showed he was above par—'way above. They'll take him, if they can."

"We'll see," La Boucherie said soberly. "It must be almost time, John. Mustn't keep *them* waiting. You're only a parent, you know."

"And a commoner," Haversham growled.

He touched the door button and stepped out of the car, to stand silent for a moment looking up at the cool loveliness of the hospital tower, rising like a ziggurat amid moonlit garden terraces, rococo with balustrades and elaborate balconies. Above the central tower loomed the immense marble figure of the blind goddess, scales in hand—the Justice that was the symbol of this world of 1970, where there was no justice.

Haversham stared up at the great cold figure. He shivered, and turned to La Boucherie.

"If this doesn't work—" he said.

"I'll do what I can. I'll get your son, if I can. And I'll train him the right way."

Some chill, subsensory premonition of the future touched Haversham then. He looked at La Boucherie, secret leader of the Freemen, with suddenly clear eyes, and the flesh seemed to drop away from that gross face, leaving the bare skull. And something more than that. A burning flame that blazed with relentless fury, the enigmatic motive that had made La Boucherie what he was, one man against the world.

"Luck," La Boucherie said.

Haversham nodded silently and turned away toward the arched portal of the hospital. Under his purple tunic he could feel the bulk of the two smash-guns, safely hidden in webbed sheaths that magnet-detector rays could not penetrate. It was treason to carry such weapons, of course. In the world the Leaders ruled nothing deadlier than the farcical toys called light-swords might be carried as sidearms.

Haversham shrugged. He would use his guns, in all probability.

The hospital lobby had been white and bare as a Grecian theatre a few years ago, but modern fashions were catching up and smothering such plainness. The walls were hung with strips of patterned plastivelvet, and the wooden waiting benches had been replaced by cushioned relaxers in rich, deep colors. Any hospital that catered to Leaders could afford expensive decor.

Haversham glowered at a tri-dimensional mural glowing against the wall. He wished that Margot had not wanted her son to be born here. The alternative would have been one of the crowded, uncomfortable commoner hospitals, of course, but it would have been better than asking favors of Alex Llewelyn. A favor Llewelyn could easily grant, for he was a Leader.

Perhaps, in the past two years, Margot had often wished she had married Llewelyn, instead of the dour, grim-faced man she had chosen.

And why not? Llewelyn was all that Haversham was not—a handsome, good-natured, successful man who had never had a serious thought in his life. He had lived the life of a medieval nobleman, while Haversham's life had been that of a serf. Margot had never complained, not once, but nevertheless she must have been conscious of the wide gulf.

HAVERSHAM scowled and pushed his way, hat in hand, through the scattering of fashionable ladies and swaggering gallants in the lobby. In his russet and dark purple he made a sombre figure among the bright satins of the crowd. The men flaunted their colored cloaks; the women in clinging Grecian garments minced on tottering heels and flashed glances through the transparent dark lace which modestly veiled their faces. Most of them were trailed by elderly duennas, lynx-eyed guardians of the new moral code which was beginning to set so strict a seal upon feminine virtue.

"Your wishes, sir?"

Haversham paused before one of the reception screens. A man's face showed on the panel.

"I'm John Haversham. Dr. Thornley expects me. Key Seventeen bio-forty."

"Elevator Twenty-four."

A guide light glimmered above the opening door, and Haversham stepped into the compartment, his heart beginning to thud with thick, heavy beats.

Medico Thornley met him in the corridor above, his ruddy face alight.

"Health, Haversham. There's good news."

"Good news?"

"Yes, I. . . But you'll want to see your wife. I haven't told her yet either. But you

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can guess what it is. A great honor, Haversham!"

Haversham's dark face set more grimly. He followed Thornley down the hall, thinking of Margot, and of Alex Llewelyn, and of what he himself must do tonight. He was thinking of his new-born son, and of the Freemen of Earth, all the little, voiceless people who looked to La Boucherie for guidance and championship.

Margot's glossy dark hair lay in ringlets on the pillow. She smiled up at him—very fragile, very hopeless, very young, and an unaccustomed gentleness stirred in Haversham's heart. Then his lips tightened again.

"Hello, darling," she said. "You just missed Alex. Do you know what he wants to do? Take little Martin into mnemonic psychology under him. He says the potentialities seem to check."

"Oh, he told you, then," Thornley said disappointedly. He fumbled with the chart buttons at the foot of the bed. " 'Martin Haversham'," he read. " 'A potential Leader. He's been chosen—' "

"A Leader?" Haversham's voice was harsh. "What branch? Does he test for Mnemonics?"

"We can't be sure yet, of course. At birth, all we can do is check the potentialities of the brain. But the heredity patterns indicate a trend toward the psychological sciences. He'll certainly develop into a high-grade mentality. Psychology, sociology—he'll find his place. And he'll get the best training possible at the Creche." Thornley looked more sharply at Haversham. "By the way," he went on quickly, "this doesn't mean that you'll lose your status as parents—either of you. A lot of people have that idea. It's wrong. Martin will be trained and educated in the Creche, naturally, but you can see him whenever you like, provided you don't upset his mental and emotional balance."

"I see."

"And eventually he'll go to Research and follow his natural bent. The Leaders live the life of Reilly, you know. Your boy's very lucky."

"Yes," Haversham said. "May I see him?"

"John—" Margot said.

Quickly the steel-worker bent and kissed her. She looked after him, the faint shadow of trouble in her eyes, as he went out with the physician.

Thornley led the way to a dimly lit room walled with glass on one side. Behind the barrier Haversham could see a plain cubicle. A nurse appeared, holding a baby, blanket-wrapped, in her arms. She drew back a fold to reveal the scarlet, wrinkled face.

"I suppose it's against the rules for me to hold him?" Haversham said.

"Sorry. Unless you want to go through the Cleansing Rooms. We can't take any risks with germ infection."

Haversham hesitated. If he stripped, his weapons would be revealed.

His hand slipped into his blouse. He shook a smash-gun from its sheath. With almost the same motion, he aimed and fired. The glass crashed, a ten-foot circle blasted into tinkling shards. Thornley's jaw dropped. He made an impotent gesture as Haversham sprang through the gap and snatched the child from the astonished nurse's arms.

The warm, living bundle fitted neatly into the crook of Haversham's elbow. It was the first time, and the last, that he was ever to hold his son, and he felt an unexpected warmth of emotion at the contact.

A Leader, eh! An accursed Cromwellian! Not if he could help it!

CHAPTER II

Rescue—and Death!

MEDICO THORNLEY had whirled and was racing toward the door. Haversham went back through the gap in the glass, his sharp command halting the medico in his tracks.

"Wait!"

"Great heavens, man! Are you crazy? You can't do this!"

"Shut up," Haversham said.

He saw that the nurse had fainted, which was convenient for his purposes. He pushed the muzzle of the smash-gun into Thornley's ribs.

"You know what this will do to you," he said. "You've seen smash-gun wounds, haven't you?"

The medic shuddered.

"Then take it easy. We're leaving the hospital together. You won't be hurt unless you ask for it."

Thornley's ruddy face was splotched with pallor.

"You can't do it," he said in a strained whisper, without daring to turn his head.

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"There are Guards. . . . Do you want your son killed?"

"If necessary. Then he'll never be a Leader."

"Treason?" The medic's voice held disbelief. For treason was akin to blasphemy, though less easily forgiven.

"Open the door," Haversham said. "Hurry up!"

Thornley obeyed. They went along an empty corridor. No one seemed to have heard the smashing of the glass. The room was probably sound-proofed. At the elevator, Haversham forced Thornley aside and stepped close so that his own face showed on the viewplate.

"Lift, please."

"Coming up."

The door slid open. Haversham nodded, his gun hidden but ready, and Thornley preceded him into the car.

No alarm, yet.

They went down, and again the door opened. Facing them were three Guards in red uniforms, vivid as blood against the pale gray walls. Their guns were lifted.

Haversham went weak with sick desperation. Fighting an organization like this meant only death!

Thornley came to life and tried to snatch the baby from Haversham's clasp. The steelworker almost automatically pressed the smash-gun's trigger. Thornley's face vanished in red ruin. A Guard, in the path of the beam, screamed and was driven back, his chest caved in by the invisible impact of beam energy.

"All right!" Haversham snarled.

He sprang aside, shielded by the door, and aimed again. The operator was crouching in a corner, his face green. *He* wouldn't interfere. And the guards were still hesitating, not daring to kill an infant who had been chosen to be a Leader. The life of any Leader was sacrosanct.

Haversham's gun jolted the deadly energy bolts. The Guards died, flung back to the wall and crushed against it.

The door of the elevator began to close. Haversham sprang through the narrowing gap, saw that his road lay momentarily open, and raced toward the portal, out into the cool night air, where stars blazed in a purple sky, and where La Boucherie waited in the driveway.

But the alarm had been given. Footsteps sounded. The grounds suddenly were bathed in a flow of brilliant white light.

Something sighed, a soft whisper of death, and a pinprick stabbed Haversham's back. Cold instantly numbed him. His heart jolted, lost its normal rhythm, and he knew that he was dying.

He had almost reached the car. Its door was open, and La Boucherie was leaning out. Haversham reeled forward and threw the blanket-clad child as he collapsed. La Boucherie made a deft catch.

The rubberoid pavement swung up at Haversham in a tilting leap. He felt the impact dimly. Faintly he heard the soft whine of La Boucherie's car as it shot into motion.

The child was safe—his son would never be a Leader. That, at least, had been accomplished.

His body rolled. He could see the tower of the hospital. Somewhere in that colossal structure was Margot. Margot!

Above the tower loomed the giant figure of the blind goddess. She was leaning, he thought, about to fall and crush him. But as she toppled, somehow she dissolved into an infinity of twinkling star-points, and they faded into utter blackness.

La Boucherie—that was his last thought . . . .

THE hag crouched against the wall, drawing her filthy rags closer about her, and watched La Boucherie lumbering back and forth across the tiny room. Once or twice she peered from the window, but no Guardsmen ever entered this underworld district where vice and crime hung like a miasmic cloud above the rotting tenements.

La Boucherie whirled toward the pallet where the baby lay. He crouched like some immense vulture, gross and terrible, his cloak billowing. He thrust his head forward, glaring down.

"Martin Haversham!" he whispered. "Mart Havers, it'll be. We'll train you—by the Eternal we'll train you as no human has ever been trained before! You'll win the game for us! But I won't forget what John wanted, either." The man's small eyes flamed. "You'll kill Alex Llewelyn, one of these days. And your mother, too. They'll die, all of them, all those swine that robbed me! The time will come!"

The pulpy, strong hands were a vulture's claws.

"And if you fail me, if you dare to fail me—"

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But Martin Haversham could not understand. . . .

Twenty-five years later, he still found it hard to understand. La Boucherie was fifty-five now, but the same flaming purpose that had fired him from the beginning was with him still.

The world had grown older, too. It had not changed much. Science, art, and religion had sedately advanced under the great law of Justice. Inflexible Justice, blind and cold as the goddess, administered impartially by the Leaders in the country that was the whole planet.

The Leaders. It was possible to trace the record back now, and see where the trend had begun, after the first kindling of atomic fire and the decade of political and moral chaos that followed. The two abortive wars that broke out and burned with atomic violence and were ended within weeks had left their scars deep in the social fabric of mankind. And then MacKennow Greeley had come along, and provided the answer.

There were many who thought the answer worse than the problem it had solved. But within ten years the Greeley party ruled the nation, and in another ten, the world.

Politico-idealists, they called themselves, sometimes Puritans, most often Cromwellians. Inflexible justice was their keystone—mechanical, unyielding justice, based on Greeley's theory as set forth in his "Culture of Man." Natural selection was his chief basic. He wrote:

In the past there have been leaders born in every era—the mystics Buddha, Appollonius, Confucius; the scientists Newton, Edison, Darwin; the statesmen Machiavelli, Disraeli, Caesar; the politico-conquerors Genghis Khan, Cromwell, Napoleon. They were certainly not supermen, but they possessed capabilities and potentialities beyond those of the average men. Such powers should be trained by, and should work for humanity and the social unit. These men are the minds of the race. They must be recognized, cultivated, trained to utilize their full powers.

Technologically it was a new era. Electronics had begun to reach maturity. Turbo-jet engines revolutionized flying. New antibiotics brightened the medical outlook. And one day long before, in November, 1946, a man in a light plane had dropped six pounds of dry ice pellets into a cloud and created the first artificial snowstorm.

The rocket ship could not be guided, but La Boucherie was throwing full power into those jets. (CHAP. XIX)

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Out of that beginning a great science grew. Since the days of creation man had been slave of the weather, until now. The Deluge, the Ice Ages, hurricanes, droughts, the Dust Bowl—all that was coming under control; imperfectly, true, but it was a beginning. In a way, a futile beginning, for before long thinking men realized there could be no real advance beyond the present.

The Cromwellians dared not allow advances, for advance meant change, and stasis was the foundation upon which their world was built.

In that world Mart Havers grew up, and La Boucherie grew older.

La Boucherie had weathered the quarter-century well enough, as fat men often do. His hair was white now; his eyes were chilly. The fat had turned to granite, but this was not apparent to the casual glance of the social world which knew him so well.

He sat back, on a winter night, in his deeply cushioned relaxer, smiling down the dimmed length of a club-size autocar. His smile was more than ever the lipless smile of a skull, but few people sensed that.

Tonight he was taking a party slumming, out of shining, luxurious Reno into the notorious Slag between the city and the spaceports. Most of the crowd were youngsters, to whom La Boucherie was as unchanging a figure in society as the colored plastic figure of Greeley in Washington, or the goddess on Bedloe's Island.

UNDER the cold blue stars, through streets of peacock-plastics lighted with shifting colors, the club-car glided smoothly. Some of the crowd were dancing in the broad aisle to the sentimental strains of a waltz. A few leaned at the little bar at the car's far end, sipping cocktails and watching the dancers. In deep relaxers around the ribbed walls duennas and a fierce mother or two sat watchfully. Conventions had stiffened into iron rigidity in twenty-five years. Conventions that were anachronisms.

The girls, whirling in the waltz, swayed their bright colored skirts that belled out over ruffled petticoats. Their small, heelless slippers whispered on the plastic floor. The young men thrust their short capes out with a jaunty elbow cocked, hands resting ostentatiously near the hilts of their light-swords, those weapons without which no brawling dandy was fully equipped. Most of the young faces bore the scars of those dueling swords, and La Boucherie's pale wisps of brows lifted ironically.

Light-swords. Toys for quarrelsome children. Translucent hilts of glowing plastic swung in a scabbard at each gallant's hip, ready to leap to the owner's hand and spit out its long blade of burning force for the duel. And because those blades could inflict superficial burns, painful for a day, these brawlers thought themselves romantically one with the great swashbucklers of legend. The harmless fencing with force-blade spattering sparks from force-blade was no farce to them, but a serious matter of face lost or gained. La Boucherie's lipless mouth widened.

Mart, now, he thought. Young Mart Havers, waiting tonight in a thieves' den in the Slag, waiting for him. Whatever his faults, Mart was no posturing fool like these. But as for Mart's faults—that was another matter.

La Boucherie looked out past the ornate windows of the car, past the colored walls of Reno where light crawled in ceaselessly changing hues. He did not see the swirl of thin snow blowing past the glass. He was remembering what young Mart had cost him in despair, in heartbreak, in bloody ruin of all his hopes and plans. If Mart had grown into a superman in the years since that terrible time when he had been forcibly taken from the hospital, he could scarcely have compensated La Boucherie for all he had unwittingly caused.

But Mart was no superman.

His kidnapping, twenty-five years ago—the abduction of a potential Leader—had been the first step in La Boucherie's great plan to supply his Freemen with the leadership they must have. Or at least a figurehead. He himself was quite as capable as any leader, he thought, but he did not have the name, and that was all-important. Mart *had* been chosen to be a Leader, and therefore should have shown the qualities for leadership which he did not.

CHAPTER III

To Be Free!

FROM the beginning La Boucherie's plan had gone wrong. Because of Mart

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Havers, the Freeman had faced disaster immediately.

The child's abduction had touched off a spark igniting massacre all over the world. It was a second slaughter of the Huguenots. No one liked to look back on that bloody time when three thousand Freemen died at the hands of the Leaders' Guardsmen. They were hunted down like wolves. Informers were paid bounties.

But La Boucherie had escaped. No breath of suspicion had touched him, miraculously enough.

He smiled, broad chest expanding as he breathed deep.

The dancing had stopped within the club autocar, and soft-voiced girls and men were gathering at the windows to stare out at the fabulous Slag. La Boucherie watched a girl in coral-pink flirt her curls sideward and coquettishly tap the man next to her with a fan. Her laughter tinkled artificially through the car. La Boucherie, while admiring the girl's exquisitely unreal prettiness, let his own dark hatred of her and all she represented come welling up almost luxuriously in the depths of his mind.

How much the world had changed, he thought, since he was as young as this coquette! He could remember when functional lines in building and designing had been beautiful, when clothes had been unadorned, and women as straightforward as men. But he could remember it only dimly, for even in his youth the change had been beginning.

Among the disciplined masses, he had watched today's flamboyance grow, and had grown with it. He wore clothing as gorgeous as any; he liked wearing it. But he loathed the implication behind these bright swashbuckling styles. He was conditioned now to admire the rococo buildings of modern tradition, the colors splashed on colors, the decorations upon decorations. The clean, functional lines of yesterday looked unfinished to him now, threadbare and outdated. But still he hated all that lay between functionalism and today's rococo.

Much lay between them. The Leaders had known that mankind cannot be repressed too far without emotional release. And so this had been the release provided—this personal gorgeousness of cloak and plume and light-sword. This intricate social tradition involving "face," the jockeying to gain it, and to degrade a rival by its loss. The constant dueling with blades of shining force. The tradition among the men of gallant brawling.

And among the women? La Boucherie was quite sure that the Leaders had cold-bloodedly forced the women back into subservience for a purpose. If men under the rigid laws of the Leaders felt the pinch sometimes, why not give them a lesser race upon whom they in turn could impose rigid laws? So women had gone back, by subtle degrees, imperceptibly but swiftly, into the old social and legal shackles from which they once had been emancipated.

So deftly had the Leaders managed it that the women themselves would have been the first now to protest against a change. For what they lost in freedom, did they not more than make up in leisure, in pampered home life while the men worked, in comfortable days of gossip and idleness, and nights of gaiety among the colorful cities of earth?

And who could say, thought La Boucherie, a little bitterly, that this coquette in pink, tapping her gallant with a folded fan, was not happier tonight than her grandmother who spent her life at an office desk, man's equal, who had never seen in any face the indulgent tenderness beaming back upon this pink coquette in the club autocar.

Within the hour, La Boucherie reminded himself, he must manage to guide the party to the Jolly Roger. Unobtrusively he flexed his fingers, still the strong talons of a bird of prey, and more ruthless now. At the Jolly Roger Georgina would be waiting, and the elaborate little comedy they had worked out together would get under way.

Georgina was a fine actress. In another culture she might have made a great name for herself as a mimic, for she could portray with the utmost conviction any rôle she once had a chance to study. And Georgina for three years had worked as ladies' maid in the great mansions of the wealthy. She could play a spoiled young coquette now with more authority than many a girl born to the rôle. She would have her chance tonight.

He glanced down the car at the thin, pinched, leathery face of the Leader called Avish, and sank his own fat chin upon his chest to smother his smile.

Petty comedy! La Boucherie ground his teeth in sudden, silent rage at the part he himself had to play. These surges of impotent resentment came over him sometimes, and he had to fight them down with all the vast store of self-discipline he had built up

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over the past twenty-five years of growing disappointment, continuous failure.

"Mart Havers," he thought. "Mart Havers." And the thick fingers curled on his knee.

If he could have looked forward this far on the night Haversham had died, he would have closed those fingers about the neck of the newborn child and spared himself and the world much misery. No, he must not think of Mart Havers tonight. There was something more important than Mart on his mind now, something with a chance of success behind it. Not Mart Havers, who was flat failure. . . .

THE Slag celebrated Saturday night, as usual, with intoxicated revelry. A decade before, a sudden boom had built this suburb on empty grazing land, but it had deteriorated. The unexpected advance in space-flight to and from the Moon was mostly responsible. It wasn't pleasant to live within sight and sound of the roaring blasts of rocket-craft on their way to the strictly private Government mines on the satellite. Nerves jolted under the erratic impact of booming, tearing thunder that ripped out day and night. The scarlet flashes made sleep difficult; the fumes were atrocious.

So the suburb, with its plasticoid buildings and spreading parks slipped down the social scale till it took a place with Limehouse, the Bowery, and the Kasbah. It was the Slag—the home of the poor, the petty criminal, the social misfit, and the occasional haunt of such slumming parties as this.

Mart Havers was lounging along Stink Street—once Pinewood Lane—with a cigarette pasted to his lip and scented smoke trickling from his nostrils. He was a big man, with rough, rather heavy blunt features, and his dark eyes looked out somberly at a world in which he had no place.

Snow fell slowly in dying gusts as the clouds were swept away by an icy wind. To the east was a reddening flare that pulsed and faded as a spaceship jockeyed for its landing. Heavy thunder muttered.

Havers coughed and inhaled soothing smoke to offset the foul odor of rocket exhausts. His big body, clothed in form-fitting, warm garments of dull blue, moved more swiftly along the street.

Living a masquerade was not easy, and never had been. But it was, of course, the only way since the Cromwellian Leaders had clamped down. Political organizations were taboo, with a capital penalty. Other crimes had punishments, but not as severe. The State recognized treason as the only sin requiring surgical treatment.

So Mart Havers was not, apparently, a Freemen. There weren't any Freemen any more—the Leaders thought. Havers was a gambler, thief, and con man, and, as such, he had occasional brushes with the law, but he was not hunted down ruthlessly. He survived.

His sullen mouth twisted. He walked on, heavy shoulders swinging, past a block of deserted apartment buildings, grimy and desolate, but still in good repair of glass and plasticoid. The builders a decade ago had been efficient. It was more expensive to raze a house than to let it stand, and the Slag was full of such structures, the homes of a few drunken bums and human strays. Guardsmen seldom troubled to search the ruins. Rehabilitation was free to all who wanted it, and the others—well, they were allowed to lie in the beds they had made.

From the east that deep mutter grew louder. The ground shook under Havers' feet as a freighter took off in a blast of searing fire. He increased his pace, for the wind was toward him and it would be wise to reach the Jolly Roger before the fumes blew down into the Slag.

The Earth-Moon run was a long-established route now, but only as a Government project. Too dangerous out of Leader hands, of course. There were priceless sources of ore on the Moon, and a regular circuit of shipping to and from the mines kept the space-field roaring just outside the Slag.

But it was all very hush-hush. Mart suspected that experiments had probably been made in the direction of the nearer planets, but if they had succeeded, the rank and file on Earth knew nothing of it. Not yet—not ever, probably. The status quo was too comfortable here. The Cromwellians wouldn't want any land rushes that might depopulate cities and upset the economic structure. The machine must be kept running. Still—

To be out there, free on a new world!

Havers grinned crookedly. Not much chance of that. A virulent whiff of rocket-gas caught him and he blinked and coughed, eyes smarting. That was about all the taste of space that he would ever get.

Light from a doorway in his path made him pause. The Goodwill Mission, Government subsidized. Havers disliked Salvation-

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ers, the weak-willed who gave up and signed the pledge. Still, he pushed through the glass door, opened a second, hermetic one, and entered the Mission. There was no choking gas in here, at any rate. Warmth and ruddy light greeted him. An immense stone fireplace filled one wall of the room, and there were relaxers here and there, occupied by ragged figures. A big audio screen stood against one wall.

Havers sat down, bulking large among the others, to wait till the fumes had cleared from the street outside. Automatic panels and spigots in a corner provided food and drink, but Havers ignored these.

He had never been in one of these Missions before, and now he examined it curiously. The people of the Slag spoke of these places with contempt and certain vague fear. That Teleaudio screen had, in the past, worked apparent miracles. Gunnar Arnheim, an unsavory racketeer, uncrowned king of the Slag, had himself fallen victim to the Mission's spell. It had touched some inherent strain of sentiment in his character, and he had signed the pledge—and vanished.

As others had vanished.

HAVERS leaned back. On the screen, a face was swimming into visibility.

It was the gentle, friendly face of an elderly woman. Her calm eyes studied the grimy, unshaven faces beneath the view-panel, and her voice sounded, low and soothing:

"We're not going to ask you to do anything. The door to the street isn't locked. You can go out whenever you want, remember. The stories you hear about the Mission aren't true. We don't hypnotize anyone. All we do is point out what we can do for you and that's magic, but scientific magic. Giving a man will-power, strengthening his body and his mind, curing him of various weaknesses, so he can accomplish anything he wants—well, that's been done in the past, and it'll be done again."

"Not with me, lady," a red-bearded gnome said, half-tipsy on *sakar*-smoke.

Somebody near him said, "Shut up," and he subsided, mumbling incoherently. Havers chuckled.

"You've been hearing stories about the Purge," the woman went on. "I know they sound pretty bad. I'd like to explain, if you'll listen. You see, it was developed originally to replace capital punishment. But it does much more than that now. The Leaders have worked out a system of mental therapy that washes a man's mind clean. He loses all his memories. He's given a new chance, the second start in life that lots of men need.

"After that, he's cured of any physical ailment he may have, conditioned until he's a healthy specimen, and then he's allowed to learn anything he wants, whatever he shows special aptitude for. But he's the same man. We don't steal his soul. We gave Gunnar Arnheim the Purge, cured him of *sakar* poisoning, and now he's a space-ship research engineer."

"In three months?" the red-bearded man yelled. "That's what *you* say!"

It was a two-way circuit. The woman smiled and nodded.

"In three months, mister. The adult brain can learn much faster than the child's, and Arnheim was given high-pressure mental education, both awake and asleep. He's just finished his trial period on the job. He can talk to you now if you want to see him. How about it?"

"Yeah!"

"All right."

The screen dimmed and brightened, showing a burly hump-shouldered man in a white gown, working at a draughtsman's blue-glass table.

"We're tuned in to the Mission at the Slag, Arnheim," the woman's voice said from off the screen. "Somebody's skeptical. Mind telling the boys they're crazy?"

The man turned, grinning. He waved an arm.

"All right, boys. You're crazy. Now what?"

"Hey, Arnie—can you hear me?" said redbeard. "What'd they do to you?"

"Fixed me up," Arnheim said, "just like Janie says. I feel swell, too. Better play along with her."

The screen blanked out, and "Janie's" voice interrupted.

"It's hard to convince you, so I'll show you some test cases. Ask me questions if you want."

New pictures grew, some taken in the Slag, showing men and women in lives of hopeless degradation, victims of drugs, sickness, poverty, psychoses—anything and everything that would stab the lesson home to the men in the Mission.

"You're thinking the Purge might work on Arnheim, but not on you," Janie said. "Well, are you worse specimens than these? See where they are now."

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They were, according to the screen, reclaimed and happy, working in good positions and contented with their lot. Many spoke to to the watchers at the Slag. Finally the screen showed a huge arrow pointing down to a door at its left.

"Anybody who wants to go out there," Janie said, "will find twenty erg-credits and a can of thermo-tablets—with no strings attached. You can buy liquor with the credits, and the thermos will keep you warm. The Slag gets pretty cold in winter. Weather report says snow, by the way. Wait a minute, now. Here's the other door." A new arrow showed. "Anybody who wants to try the Purge, go in there. Give your names to the desk-screen, and you're all set. Now let's have a comedy reel, for a change."

A cartoon lit up the wall, and fully a dozen men rose and went through the door at the right of the screen. Red-beard started to follow, cursed thickly, and swung to the other door. He was the only one. The rest of the Salvationers remained in their relaxers.

CHAPTER IV

The Jolly Roger

HAVERS got up, his glance instinctively going to the door that marked the Purge. Under different circumstances he might have considered that solution himself. But he had a definite aim in life, and propaganda could not stir him so easily.

Yet it was excellent propaganda, he realized, well fitted to the psychology patterns of the derelicts. "Waste not, want not," said the Government. They could always use good men. And the Purge, taking the place of other punishments, had swayed popular feeling still further toward the Cromwellians.

Justice, even to the outcasts of Earth—justice, Havers thought, but not liberty or equality. The social pattern was frozen, and humanity had to follow that pattern, or else be outcast. They were not even allowed to remain outcasts! This blasted Mission!

The rocket fumes were gone when Havers stepped out into the street, though a low muttering still came from the east. He walked briskly toward his destinaton, feeling warm and langourous after his brief rest, but a chill wind sharpened his senses.

Again he passed a Guard, and his dark features grew sullen. The Guards were not the power of the Cromwellians. The Leaders, the technicians, were that. But the Guards typified the mailed fist. They would strike mercilessly to preserve the Government that ruled the Earth, and they had standing orders to investigate ruthlessly any slightest hint of treasonable activity.

But they paid little heed to Havers, who was—supposedly—merely a swindler, thief, and con man.

A man sat against a grimy doorpost, head bent, an empty *sakar* tube beside him. Havers stepped over his legs. Ten paces beyond, he turned into an uninviting doorway and mounted ramshackle steps that led up into the gloom of a building. Spider webs clung to the walls. Havers grinned. This was pure atmosphere, all faked, all created by the owner of the Jolly Roger, who knew what slumming parties wanted.

At the top of the flight, he pushed open a creaking door and entered a huge, dimly lit room. It occupied the entire second floor of the building. The partitions had been knocked out, but a few remained standing for the sake of Bohemianism.

The big room looked like a shambles. There was disorder everywhere. Tables and chairs were scattered about at random; cushions were piled up against the walls; on a couch near the door a nearly naked woman was sleeping what was presumably a drugged slumber. She was paid by the hour, Havers knew, and tourists were properly shocked and edified.

Sporadic dancing and music came from one corner, and the air was stuffy with perfumed smoke that neutralized the omnipresent rocket-jet fumes. This was the Jolly Roger, one of many clip joints that battened in the Slag.

Havers pushed through the crowd toward the bar across one end of the big disorderly room. He had no plans, beyond the immediate intention of getting drunk. He ought to be up in the Aleutian secret base now, studying under the guidance of the dusty little man who had been his tutor during the sporadic doses of education to which La Boucherie had subjected him since childhood.

None of them had been any good. None of them ever would, while the present set-up continued, though La Boucherie didn't know

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that and Havers was only dimly aware of it, being too close to his own problem for perspective.

They were trying to interest him in nuclear physics now. It wasn't difficult, but it was so deadly, hopelessly dull to him. He had failed La Boucherie in this as in everything, and he was a renegade just now from the tutor and the lab and the Aleutians.

Havers knew La Boucherie was in Reno. He knew they might meet. Perhaps that was why he had come here, not realizing himself how ready he was for an explosion. Let them meet, his sub-threshold mind seemed to urge, and get the explosion over once and for all.

He leaned on the bar and ordered a second drink before he began on his first.

He was half-way through his third, and beginning to feel mildly mellow and more at peace with the world, when a waiter jogged his elbow and nodded across the room. In one of the half-screened booths along the wall a girl was beckoning to him.

HAVERS didn't know her, but he picked up his glass and threaded his way through the tables. The girl wore a black lace veil drawn across her face like a rather ineffectual mask. Her ruffled skirts filled up half the booth and her smooth bare shoulders and lace-mitted arms leaned forward from the folds of a deeply furred cloak thrown back across her chair. Her hair was like black watered silk under the black veil, and an expensive fragrance rose from the booth as Havers shouldered his way into it through the crowd. Then he paused, looking down.

"Oh—Georgina," he said, not without disappointment.

"Mart, you idiot," she began, then gave a smooth-shouldered shrug and said, "Oh well, never mind. Let it go. I suppose you know La Boucherie's on his way here?"

"Blast La Boucherie."

"Yes, I know! But . . . Oh, why does everything happen to me?" She spoke to the man in the booth with her. "Pusher—Mart Havers. Mart, this is Pusher Dingle. A man with an idea. Come on, sit down. He wants to talk."

Havers hooked a chair forward with his foot and sat down with his back to the screen and his face toward the distant door. From the corner of his eye he considered "Pusher" Dingle, who was revolving a small blue glass of rye and watching him with equal obliqueness.

Pusher was fat, but with a bouncing, sparrowlike fatness that had no resemblance to La Boucherie's bulk. When he smiled, white-gold artificial teeth gleamed beneath his yellow-gray mustache. He had sleek yellow hair, streaked with gray, combed back from a sloping forehead. His right hand was a mechanical gadget of plastic and steel.

"You want to talk?" Havers inquired ungraciously.

Pusher Dingle tapped the table with his plastic substitute for a hand.

"I've heard you're smart," he said.

"I am." Havers' voice was mild.

"I need help. Can't use a gun." He indicated the plastic gadget. "Nice little job, that. Delicate as forceps. But no good for shooting. You know how to handle a gyroflier?"

"Sure."

"I've got a job, and maybe you're the man to help me pull it off. I had one, but he got Salvation last week. Been asking questions

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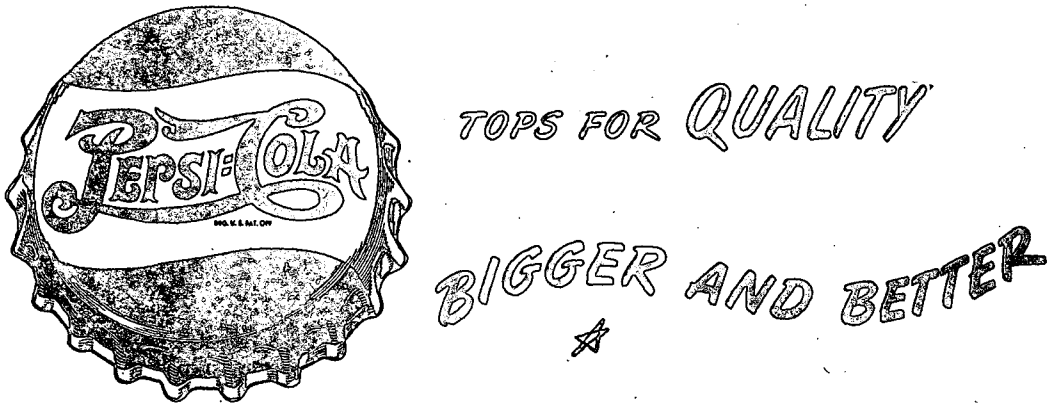

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around, and you sound like the right man to me. I—"

"*Ssst!*" Georgina leaned forward sharply, nodding toward the door.

The two men turned to look. There was a subtle, siphonlike motion in the crowd as La Boucherie herded his gorgeously dressed group of slummers into the Jolly Roger. Everyone there went automatically into his act, and Havers could almost feel the instant determination to get what he could that drew every man a little way toward the sightseers before he could stop himself.

Georgina pushed the black lace veil a little upward, leaving her mouth and chin visible, and an air of indescribable demureness mingled with daring seemed to change the very set of her bones and muscles as she, too, went into her prearranged act. Now she was no longer the rather commonplace little go-between whom La Boucherie had employed for years, but a pampered and rebellious darling of the upper classes, bored with luxury, tantalizing, dangerous, demure. Georgina could act.

They watched La Boucherie's apple-green cloak swinging out from his great shoulders as he led the way toward the bar, the youngsters pressing behind him. Most of the mothers had stayed in the car, scented handkerchiefs pressed unnecessarily to their nostrils in the air-conditioned interior. But several grim duennas paced among the girls, whose fans were at their faces as they shot bright, excited glances around the room. The gallants kept their hands ridiculously on the hilts of their toy swords, and looked fiercely at the synthetic dangers about them.

La Boucherie was shooting glances around the room under his tufted brows, looking for Georgina. He saw her just as the bartender was handing him a glass, and La Boucherie all but let it slip through his thick fingers when he recognized the heavy-shouldered figure beside her.

Havers met the fat man's glare with a sardonic nod, and La Boucherie swore to himself as he felt the tide of angry crimson surge upward into his face. Blood beat heavily at his temples and he cursed Havers all over again for the sudden throb of headache that increased blood pressure meant to a man as heavy as La Boucherie. It was another tiny debt in the long list of big debts and small chalked up against Mart Havers.

The Leader, Avish, who stood at La Boucherie's elbow, leaned forward.

"Anything wrong?"

La Boucherie started to choke a denial, then suddenly changed his mind. He had been an opportunist all his fifty-five years and here was a chance too fortuitous to miss.

"That girl," he said, and the thickness of his voice was convincing, though it sprang from another cause. "Over there in the booth. The one with the veil. I know her. She's got no business here. She . . . Excuse me."

HE CONTRIVED as he swung his bulk away from the bar to give Avish an almost inadvertent push in the same direction. It was all that was needed. Even from here Avish could see that Georgina was a pretty thing.

So the thin-faced Leader was beside him when La Boucherie stood above Georgina's table and scowled down at her with a rage whose origin she knew, though not a flicker of her eyes toward Havers betrayed it. Havers himself, after that one ironic nod, had taken no notice whatever of La Boucherie's existence. He sat with his big shoulders hunched and his head sunk between them, staring indifferently into his drink while the two newcomers stood above him, looking at Georgina.

"Miss Curtis"—La Boucherie's voice was properly stern—"I'll take you home immediately."

He bent forward to lift her cloak over her shoulders, but Avish was before him, performing the service with a gallantry that was slightly too familiar, since they had not yet been introduced. It was exactly the reaction La Boucherie had hoped for, and in spite of himself his anger subsided a bit.

"Not yet, please!"

Georgina's voice was petulant. She shot Avish a veiled glance that gave him the courage to brush her bare shoulder lingeringly as he drew up the cloak. Georgina was playing a spoiled and rather daring debutante, ready to invite familiarities and equally ready to resent them to the point of inciting duels. She smiled and then gave Avish a haughty glance.

"Who is this man?" she demanded of La Boucherie.

"I won't introduce you to a respectable man in a place like this," La Boucherie told her sternly. "You're lucky I haven't sent for your father. Now get up and come with me."

Submissively she rose.

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"Oh, come now, La Boucherie," Avish said, trying to make his harsh voice cajoling. "There's no harm done, is there? If you'll introduce me to Miss Curtis I'd be very grateful. Perhaps she'd even let me escort her home. It would spare you to your other guests, and I've seen the Slag before."

Mart Havers, eyes stubbornly lowered through all this, watched the colored reflections of the people around him moving in his glass. He knew what would happen. He had seen Georgina in action before. He had even played a part like this himself on occasion, for though he had no such talent for impersonation as Georgina's, La Boucherie had seen to it that his training included the social graces and he could pass as one of the upper classes himself when he cared to.

Above him there were polite flourishes and protests. Then Georgina swirled her ruffled skirts and moved away in a cloud of perfume on Avish's arm. The moment they were out of earshot La Boucherie let his breath out in a soft, explosive snort and gave his temper its freedom. He kept his voice down, for he knew eyes were upon him from the crowded bar, but his words were violent.

CHAPTER V

Rebellion

WITH his shoulders hunched a little, Havers let the storm beat unheeded upon him. Pusher Dingle's eyes widened as he listened. Clearly he expected Havers to spring at the other man's throat. But Mart only sat there, his face expressionless, his heavy brows meeting in a sullen scowl, while La Boucherie's soft-voiced, hotly worded fury spent itself in a torrent of blistering phrases.

Years of danger had instilled instinctive caution in both men, though, so the nearest La Boucherie came to saying anything revealing was his curt order for Havers to get back where he belonged.

"Not for a while yet," Mart said, speaking for the first time since La Boucherie had begun his tirade. He knew the right weapon to use against the older man—casualness that he didn't feel in the least.

La Boucherie opened his mouth and closed it again. He swept his cloak around him with an angry motion of his arm and a swirl of bright colors.

"Now," he said. "I mean—*now*."

Havers signaled the waiter and got a refilled glass. La Boucherie's brows met. He had noticed Mart's nearly empty wallet.

And Havers had seen La Boucherie's glance. Driven by a vital desire to assert his independence, he grinned across the table.

"I know," he said. "I'm nearly broke. But I've got a job coming up that ought to pay off. Eh, Pusher?"

Pusher Dingle's eyes flickered warningly. La Boucherie studied the little man.

"Oh, no," he said. "I can guess what sort of a job that would be. That's out."

Mart Havers had never been classified as expendable. He was the only Freeman, outside of La Boucherie himself, with Leader potentiality and all that it denoted.

The two men's glances clashed. It was a struggle no less violent because it was necessarily concealed. Then, deliberately, Havers turned his shoulder to La Boucherie.

"I'll see you later," he said. "I've got to discuss this job."

Again Pusher's eyes flickered.

A muscle twitched at the corner of La Boucherie's tight mouth. He was no fool. He knew that at last he was facing what he had dreaded for years—open rebellion. And he knew that he had been maneuvered into a spot where he could not use the pressure he usually did. Mart was in a mood to ignore him completely, to risk his neck deliberately, simply to spite his mentor.

Again the blood pounded in La Boucherie's temples. With a tremendous effort he forced his anger down. He turned to Pusher Dingle, studying the man. At last he nodded, apparently satisfied.

Under the shield of his cloak his thick hands made quick motions. A bundle of banknotes, torn in half, changed hands. The transaction was invisible except to the three men concerned. Pusher concealed the money deftly.

"A thousand," La Boucherie said softly. "No good until you get the other halves of the bills." He patted his pocket. "That's an earnest. I can pay you more than you could make otherwise, and there'll be no risk. Meet me in an hour at Twilight House. Code word 'Golconda.' That means both of you."

He didn't wait for an answer. He knew

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Pusher Dingle's type well enough to be sure of him. And he thought he knew Havers thoroughly, too. Without a word he turned, cape flaring, and went back to his party. . . .

Twilight House had been an apartment building ten years ago. Its ornate plastic rooms and corridors were unchanged physically, but the life that went on inside them bore little likeness to the respectable family life for which the building had been designed. There were private rooms here for every purpose for which men might require privacy. The proprietors of Twilight House asked no questions. A man paid for his space, was assigned a code word and thereafter might give the code to as many as the room would accommodate, if he chose.

"Golconda" admitted Havers and Pusher to a dim cubicle on the third floor. Red rocket-flare pulsed rhythmically through its one window from some experimental work going on down at the field. High walls and barbed wire shut out the curious, but that intermittent glow could not be concealed, speaking silently as it did of the forbidden spaceways and the worlds just outside mankind's reach.

La Boucherie sat waiting impatiently in the red glow.

"Sit down, sit down," he said. "I haven't any time to waste. You, Dingle—you've got a Sherlock. Don't argue. I've been making inquiries. How good are you with it?"

Pusher Dingle glanced at Havers, who shrugged.

"I'm good," Pusher said, after a moment's hesitation. "You've got to be good to operate a Sherlock. There aren't any half-way men with *that* gadget."

HE WAS right, of course. The tiny specialized robots were hard to procure and even harder to handle, since the control apparatus was extremely complicated.

"All right, you're good." La Boucherie nodded. "I know what you've been using your Sherlock for. Penny ante stuff. I can put you onto something that'll make it worth your while to drop everything else." He flapped his handful of torn bills. "This could be just a start, if you'll work for me. How about it?"

"Doing what?"

"A frame, to start with. Perfectly safe."

"I'll give it a try."

"Good." La Boucherie nodded briskly. He did not seem to be aware that Havers was in the room. I'll give you the whole story. You've got a good reputation around town. I've been checking. The man I'm after is a Leader. Avish . . . No—wait! I told you it's perfectly safe. We're covered, as long as we're careful. Now, here's the story."

He did not glance at Havers, but Mart knew the story was directed at him, not Pusher. He listened with reluctant interest, hidden behind his usual sullen mask.

"Avish got drunk and talked too much in the wrong places. Avish is an engineer, not top circle, but good in his field. He invented a stabilizer recently, something they've been needing. Too many spaceships have cracked up for lack of a good one. Well, Avish found out last week that the administration was planning to offer a big reward for a stabilizer, so he decided to wait.

"That's an anti-social act, enough to get him demoted, and he's been suspected of shady deals before. If the government learns he is holding back his invention to cash in on the reward, it will be pretty bad for Avish. I could make this a straight shakedown, but I'd like a little more information first. I'll tell you what to look for. Incidentally, it won't mean anything to you, so don't try any tricks. And Avish himself hasn't enough money to make a doublecross worth your while, either. I've got more than he has. This is a private matter. Now, how about it?"

"All right with me. Who's going to plant the Sherlock?"

"I am." Mart Havers' voice startled them, he had been so long silent. Now he crossed his legs, the chair creaking as he moved. "I'll plant it. I'm in on this too, remember."

La Boucherie looked at him, the veins in his thick neck congesting. His temples gave a sudden throb with the ache he was coming to associate with Mart Havers and anger.

"All right, Mart," he said with hatred in his voice, but softly. "All right! Go. And I hope you fail. I hope they kill you."

* * * * *

The sleek muscles of the great black horse moved rhythmically against Havers' thighs. He rode arrogantly erect in the inlaid saddle, feet firm in silver stirrups, a scarlet cloak tossing behind him, caught by the blast of cold wind that blew down Reno's wide avenues. The hoofs rang like bells on the pavement as the horse cantered on, black mane flying.

Far to the east was the Slag. Not even

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the distant glow of red could be seen from Reno. For almost two weeks Havers and Georgina had been here, and the plan was working well. Tonight might spell the finish.

Havers' heavy-featured face with its thick black bars of eyebrows looked sullen, almost brutal, as he rode along wrapped in his secret thoughts. On the slowly sliding paveways, each speed-level rimmed with luminous rails, men and women moved, types strange to Havers, though he had seen such people all his life. Their motives were alien to him. But their emotions . . . A wry smile twisted his lips. Emotions were a common denominator.

His masquerade had gone unchallenged so far, his forged credentials showing him to be a visiting Guardsman on leave, giving him entrée into the social circles he sought. Why, indeed, should there be any suspicion of his *bona fides*? The administration did not know that any disaffection existed. Or if they did, they were careful not to reveal that knowledge. The *status quo* was their god now. At any cost it must be preserved and defended. No intimation must ever be made that change was conceivable, or that any man alive desired it.

All through the mounting levels of the Government that necessity alone held sway. From the plodding workmen and serving classes up through the circles of wealth and aristocracy and into the high level of the Leaders themselves Cromwellian perfectionism held all minds hypnotized in its grip, like a culture preserved in amber for all time to come, frozen, motionless, fearing change as they feared death itself.

AND above the Leaders . . . Havers let his sullen glance lift to the high white tower overtopping all Reno, where the Government chambers housed their secrets, where the Leaders lived and worked and ruled.

Who gave the orders to the Leaders? No one knew. There must somewhere be a head man. The Cromwellians functioned too perfectly not to operate by a well-coordinated plan handed down by a man or a group as well-coordinated. Was it a man, or a council who really ruled the world?

Havers doubted if even all the Leaders knew the answer to that. Orders came and they obeyed them. It was enough, in this obedient culture. No one risked blinding himself in attempts to peer at the sun. Accept benefices and ask nothing. Whoever the top man might be, he never made mistakes. He was infallible. No wonder the lesser men asked no questions.

It was this attitude that La Boucherie and the Freemen had so hated twenty-five years ago that they had risked everything to combat it—and lost. It was this attitude they were laboriously building up the power to fight again. Except, it seemed to Havers that La Boucherie had changed. Even in recent years the change was clear, and it must have been going on imperceptibly from those first days when the Freemen saw their hopes dashed in a single terrible day, and disbanded and went into hiding.

Bitterness was La Boucherie's keynote now. Bitterness and hatred. There were unexplained mysteries to his background that Havers sometimes wondered about. Once he had been a Leader, or in training for Leadership. Whatever it was that had happened, and when it happened, no one knew now. But La Boucherie had been cast out of the sacrosanct ranks to become the bitterest enemy Cromwellianism had today.

A billow of blue cloak caught Havers' eye. He let the unpleasant thoughts slide for a moment out of his mind as he watched the horseman ahead swing down from his saddle and stride into a neon-circled doorway from which laughter and clinking glasses sounded.

A Weather Patrolman—a Storm Smasher in the popular cant. Whatever remained to the world of real excitement and romance centered in the Storm Smashers now. They herded the great air masses down from the Pole and fought the typhoons and the cloudbursts high in the stratosphere, jockeying their jet-planes among streaming vapors up where the sky was black at mid-day, to insure controlled weather for the Cromwellian world. It was difficult and dangerous work, and Havers looked after the swaggering blue figure with frank admiration.

It made him feel futile and resentful when he thought of such work as that. He had so consistent a pattern of failure behind him. His mind was keen enough, but purpose was not in it. And the dark miasma of La Boucherie's hatred stifled whatever interest he might have been able to rouse to artificial life. He felt the cloud of his own defeatism close about him again as he shook the reins and cantered on.

In a way he was grateful for the immediate necessity of action, even such trivial action

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as helping Georgina swindle the cheating Avish. Without a fixed purpose he would have felt doubly out of place here in Reno. The social culture of these people could not touch him.

Superficially he responded to the flashing glamour of the life, the stylized and romanticized etiquette that ruled most activities, the patterned conversation, the massive lines of the city itself. But he was not himself a part of this world. As always, he remained a masquerader, in exile from life and the world.

He did it well enough. His training had fitted him for deception and given him ability to creat protective camouflage. And as he rode the powerful black horse down the street, Mart Havers was the target of many a slanted glance from the gaily dressed women who moved along the promenades, past shop windows decorated by highly paid artists and glittering with expensive luxuries.

Havers, with his barrel chest and darkly sullen face, was not the usual type of guardsman.

CHAPTER VI

The Sherlock

OVERHEAD the sky was losing its blue brilliance as the sun neared the western peaks. Havers rode on, fingers wound in the glittering reins. He passed a plaza where two silk-shirted young gallants were dueling hurtlessly with light-swords, sparks cascading as the force-blades clashed and spun. Havers repressed an ironic grin. Children playing with toys.

They were not children—that was the unpleasant part of it. But they were content to play with toys, while the sterile social machine spun on in its never-ending circle.

There was no advance. In spite of spaceships—that stopped short at the Moon—in spite of medical discovers and engineering development. Science was not enough. The Cromwellians had intermingled religion and social culture with science, and the result was a mutual strangulation in which the three, like the Laocoon group, struggled helplessly in the toils of immobility. In this gigantic prison, greater than Babel or the Great Pyramid, foolish men and women bowed and danced and scribbled meaningless patterns on the walls.

And at the summit the Leaders built on endlessly, uselessly, under orders from—what? A council, or a single man, or whatever mysterious sovereign really ruled this planet.

Mart Havers could see no meaning in the life. Perhaps life itself had no meaning. Certainly his own had none. He was conscious suddenly of a profound disinterest in living at all, and he put the dark thought out of his mind wearily and jingled the reins. Worst of all was the futility of striving against the Cromwellian Juggernaut, but La Boucherie gave the rules, and Havers had no choice but to follow.

He rode on. Georgina's message had been explicit. Avish was nibbling at the bait, and tonight might prove the time.

He was near enough now, he thought, glancing up at the rococco walls above the street. He could not ride to Pusher Dingle's place. There was risk enough afoot. He reined in the horse, swung himself down, tethered the beast to a curb hitching-post. No one accosted the big guardsman as he made his way across the promenades, threading an intricate path that presently brought him to a narrow street near the river.

The lobby of Dingle's apartment building was outmoded in its classic severity of line. He buzzed a signal in a row of glass-brick mail-boxes, then took the elevator. Dingle opened his door cautiously, his pulpy lower lip thrust out. At sight of the guardsman's uniform he took a deep, unsteady breath.

"Come in," he said, stepping back.

This was not easy to do. The single room was a chaos of equipment without plan or reason. Wires were strung everywhere, and cryptic gadgets were piled on benches and tables and shelves. The entire contents of half a dozen assorted laboratories seemed to have been dumped into this room.

"I want the Sherlock," Havers said briskly. "You work it from here?"

"Right here." Dingle swept an arm around at the cluttered room. "The control's mixed up with everything else. A needle in a haystack of junk. No one would guess I've got anything workable here—which is lucky. I had visitors today. Guardsman. They're getting suspicious, Havers."

"Did they find anything?"

"No. Next time, maybe. We'll have to hurry. There's one serious danger. After

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you've introduced the Sherlock into Avish's place I've got to operate it by remote control. And the right instruments can detect and locate my control here. Well"— he shrugged— "here's the Sherlock."

It was a flat plastic hemisphere six inches in diameter. Havers examined it with interest. It had been made under microscopes, he knew, and was something more than a mechanical bloodhound. Built into that compact body were devices for seeing, both by visible light and by infra-red, and an X-ray lens as well as a device for chemical analysis. Little could remain hidden from a Sherlock with a trained operator at the controls.

Havers folded under it the rubbery tentacles, each with a tiny suction cup at the tip, and thrust it out of sight under his cloak.

"Good luck," Dingle said, holding the door for him.

"We'll need it," Havers grunted, and swung out, brows drawn together.

It was a moonless night by the time he reached the Palladium. Pillars of veined plastic lit from within with coiling tints, shone vividly through the dark. Havers tossed his reins to a liveried groom and walked up the great ramp into the foyer. The vast domed hall was a kaleidescope of shifting color beneath him. A cotillion was in progress. Uniforms blazed everywhere, and the belling skirts of the women swayed like flowers in the dance.

HAVERS' eye found Georgina and Avish at a balcony table above the floor. He threaded his way toward them among the dancers.

"Hello, Mart." Georgina's greeting was gay. "It's a good thing you've got here at last. My reputation's in shreds already. What kept you?"

"You shouldn't have come at all without a chaperon," Mart said, playing out the little farce to its close.

"My dear brother, you're chaperon enough for six girls," Georgina assured him. "The Leader and I were getting worried about you." She nodded at Avish, whose thin, lined face was rather sour. "I've been invited up to Leader Avish's apartment, and of course I can't go alone. He has some space films I wanted to see."

"Government shots of the Moon works," Avish amplified with as good grace as possible. Obviously, though, he had not intended this. He had planned on a rendezvous with Georgina. Havers was spoiling things. But liquor and Georgina's charm combined to placate him and he finished his drink and called for the check.

Havers met Georgina's eyes, and a secret smile passed between them. . . .

An hour later Mart Havers stood alone in Avish's library. From the adjoining room he could hear the low voices of the Leader and Georgina, and the occasional clink of glasses. That was fine. The girl would keep Avish occupied until a suitable hiding place could be found for the Sherlock.

That wouldn't be hard. The library held shelves of old-style books as well as the racks of small cylinders that were standard equipment—talking books, visual books, and combinations. Havers found a place for the Sherlock behind a set of Dumas. There was room enough between the volumes and the shelf above so that the robot-controlled device could slip out easily, and then it would be up to Pusher Dingle.

Havers touched a tiny stud on the disc, and, after a second, touched it again. Now it was activated. In his makeshift control room elsewhere in Reno Pusher would know that the plan had succeeded, up to this point. He would be watching and waiting.

A light flickered into existence on the Sherlock and went out. Pusher would be watching now, through the gadget's electric eyes. Havers slowly replaced it behind the books, knowing that the controller was noting and remembering each detail. After this, Pusher would be on his own.

It was dangerous to leave the beam current on too long, since the Leaders' technicians had plenty of detectors rigged throughout the city. There was always the chance that somewhere in Reno a gauge-needle would jump suddenly, a man would lean toward it, frowning—and the competent machinery of the police would move into action. Triangulation could locate both Pusher's laboratory and the location of the Sherlock itself, once an unaccountable electronic-beam was noticed by watchful eyes.

That was one of the reasons why planned crime was so dangerous. The safest felonies were sudden, swift, and personal assaults, and an equally swift escape.

But this test was necessary. It didn't take long. The Sherlock slipped out from behind the books, made a circuit of the room, and returned. It vanished behind the Dumas.

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The faint light went out. And it would remain out, Havers knew, until Pusher decided the apartment was empty.

Havers smiled. Like most well-armored antagonists, the Leaders had a vulnerable point. Plate armor fails at the joints, where it has to be flexible—under the arm, for example, where the heart is easily reached with a long blade. Chain mail is another matter, but the whole civilization of the Cromwellians was too rigid to be compared to steel mesh. There were too many rules, too much rigidity. So there were the inevitable joints where their power failed them.

The whole Cromwellian civilization could be destroyed, Havers thought suddenly, if you could find the right joint in their armor where a sword could strike a mortal blow. A sword? Armor could deflect spears and arrows, but when gunpowder was utilized practically, perhaps a vulnerable spot could be found.

Well, leave that to La Boucherie. That was the old fanatic's main purpose.

Havers grunted and began examining the curious old bindings of the books. There was a sense of solidity, of luxury about this room that disturbed him. Not luxury, really, so much as the sense of *belonging*.

A gust of anger against Avish shook him. There was nothing like this in the Slag! All men were certainly not created equal, not in the world of the Cromwellians. In a primeval world, where courage and strength were important, it would be Mart Havers who owned this library, this sleek apartment in the gigantic serpentine building where a thousand families dwelt—not Avish!

THE voices from the next room had stopped. Havers went to the threshold, vaguely hoping there would be some good opportunity for a fight. He knew that reaction was the wrong one and that La Boucherie would not approve. But the devil with La Boucherie! It was all right for the old man to be devoted to an ideal, but Mart Havers was young. He had the opportunities that had long since passed by La Boucherie.

No fight seemed required. Georgina was leaning back against cushions, smiling, while Avish poured fresh drinks. The Leader glanced up as Havers entered.

"Another?"

"No."

Havers' tone was so brusque that Georgina shot him a quick warning glance. Rebelliously he ignored it. He walked over to a relaxo-chair, sat down, and crossed his arms, staring at Avish.

The Leader was ill at ease. Over his glass rim he blinked at Havers.

"What do you think of my library?" he asked.

"I don't read much."

"I do," Avish said. "You'd be surprised how often pure romance leads into practical ideas. Romance has to be based on natural forces."

"Romance?" Georgina asked.

"In the purist sense. I'm not speaking of affairs of the heart." Avish smiled. "I mean, like Hugo's 'Toilers of the Sea.' You can get that down to engineering basics. The fight with the devilfish—pure siphon principle. Jet propulsion. But it's my unconscious mind that absorbs the technical part. Consciously I just enjoy the cloak and sword treatment."

"That can be broken down to psychological basics too, can't it?" Havers asked.

"In historical romances," Avish said thoughtfully. "Not today. There's a lot of swashbuckling now, but it doesn't spring from the same causes. It's a safety valve. We buckle swashes now not because we really want to, but life would be infernally dull for most peole if they didn't. That's the real reason. It's negativistic. It doesn't get us anything we *want*. D'Artagnan's swaggering was positive. It got him what he wanted. Fighting today isn't glamorous."

"There isn't much fighting, though," Georgina said.

Instinctively Havers touched the hilt of his sword. Avish following the movement with his eyes, chuckled.

"Ornamental," he said. "You wouldn't use it in a fight, any more than you'd use your fists. Pistols are more effective. And most effective of all is a jet-propelled robot-guided projectile with an atomic warhead. Nothing like that had been used for years. But when it was, there was little glamour involved! The chivalric tradition went out with the technology, or it took other lines."

"It's stifled, perhaps," Georgina said.

"Perhaps. If we were allowed interplanetary experiments, there'd be plenty of excitement and glamour on Mars or Venus or the Moon. Only it's too dangerous. Colonies can rebel. And if a rebellion started in a lunar colony, the insurgents could bombard Earth with atomic bombs. A war

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base like that— He shook his head.

"It does seem a waste, though," Georgina said. "We've gone about as far as we can with jet-propulsion and atomic engines, haven't we? And all we do is circle the Earth."

"There's still much to discover about our own planet. Underground, we haven't dug very far down. Still, in one way you're right. It's a mistake to solve one problem completely before you start another, or at least think about it. When this world is finally Utopia we should already have started reaching out to the stars. In my own field, I feel the restrictions sometimes. Though they're necessary," he added hastily. "Excuse me. The door."

CHAPTER VII

The Death-Wish

A BUZZER was singing. Avish touched a stud, a panel opened in the wall, and Havers saw Georgina stiffen. He turned his head slowly. On the threshold were five guardsmen, resplendent in their finery, one of them wearing the gilded feathers of an eagle on his shako.

Havers forced himself to sit motionless. Guardsmen might conceivably come here for a routine reason. A colonel might come socially or on business, but the combination struck a false note.

Almost too late Havers realized that his reaction, too, struck an equally false note. He was on his feet instantly, stiffening to attention.

The colonel's eyes, which had fastened coldly upon him, drifted away. He saluted Avish.

"Priority, Leader," he said. "We've a report that beam radiation came from your apartment."

Avish looked puzzled. "Perhaps. I've some equipment."

The colonel held out a slip of paper. "It was on this wave-length. Have you been using this tonight?"

"Why, no. Are you sure?" Avish looked from Georgina to Havers. "You didn't use the visor, did you?"

"I did," Havers said quickly. "I wanted the newscast."

The Leader nodded. "That was it, then. It's quite all right."

"Not quite, sir," the colonel objected. "We traced the other end of the beam, too—the sending station. We haven't localized it yet, but it's nowhere near any televising station. And there was a directional scrambler being used."

"Some experimental work?" Avish suggested, but the officer's mouth tightened.

"That might be, sir. But we can take no chances. Have you any objection to a search?"

"No. Naturally not."

The colonel gestured. One of his men stepped forward and held up his hand. In the palm was a flat, glittering object. He showed it briefly in turn to Avish, Georgina, and Havers. It was a telecamera, and that might mean trouble, though Havers hoped for the best. As far as he knew, his photograph was not on file in the great Government bureaus, and neither was Georgina's.

As for the Sherlock—Havers half-smiled when he saw a detector being rolled in. The Sherlock was dead, at the moment. No betraying radiation would come from it, unless Pusher activated the mechanism!

He was still at attention. The colonel gave him an at ease, and the search began. Though it was thorough, the guards were careful not to damage anything belonging to a Leader. Once the detector buzzed before a blank panel, and the colonel looked inquiringly at Avish.

"My home laboratory," the Leader said. "You'll need authorization to get into it. Besides, my own key won't work until I televise my Field Chief and have him send the lock-releasing signal."

"Pass it," the colonel said. "We may ask you to open it later, sir, but I hope it won't be necessary."

It wasn't. Not that the searchers found the Sherlock, but calamity struck from an entirely different direction. The first warning Havers had was the way the colonel tilted his head a little to one side in the betraying attitude of a man listening. Faintly in the room they could hear the buzz of the earphone in his helmet. The man's eyes went unfocused for a moment as he concentrated on the incoming message. Then quick attention came into his gaze and he stared at Georgina, a hard, suspicious stare.

"Your name again?" he demanded sharply, not at all in the tone a colonel of the guard

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would normally use toward a debutante.

Havers heard the faint squeak of panic flatten her voice a little as she answered. And something drastic happened in depths of his mind which he had never explored before.

He had known Georgina for two years. There had once been a time when they had thought they loved each other. The idea had been dropped and lost by tacit consent, though in cases like that one of the two involved is always first to let the affair die. Mart Havers had been the instigator in this one. Georgina was too facile, too unstable for his taste. To his mind she seemed not quite real, so easily did she assume the personality of whatever rôle she played.

It had been nearly a year since they had last exchanged kisses. It had been longer than that since he had fancied himself in love. But when he heard the sound of panic in her voice, suddenly impulses in him unguessed until now took control. The top level of awareness. That level said;

"You aren't expendable, Georgina is. Keep still for the sake of the Freeman!"

That level vanished like smoke. Beneath it lay a stronger and more primitive impulse. He crossed his arms and fell back a step in a way that looked casual. But it brought both hands to the guns beneath his cloak, and his feet were braced for action.

THE colonel was listening again, his eyes narrowed. He gestured now, and two of his men fell back to guard the door. Avish was looking from face to face in something like panic as he began to catch the undercurrents in what went on.

"Georgina Curtis," the colonel said slowly. "Name your family line! What code number does your father carry? Where's your family center meeting? Quick, girl, answer me!"

She was, after all, only a Slag girl. Her airs and graces had been copies of the real thing, amazingly accurate copies, but without foundation. La Boucherie had never expected the farce to go this far. He had not briefed her on the ritual questions any girl of good family could answer without even thinking. Her disguise had been meant to deceive Avish, who wanted to be deceived. It would not stand up to any closer scrutiny.

"I—I can't."

It was amazing how the likeness to the debutante dropped from her. The demure arrogance, the delicate graces vanished, and she was a Slag girl dressed up in borrowed finery, staring with scared muteness around the room.

"I thought so." The colonel laughed harshly. "Leader, this woman's an impostor. One of our men recognized her photograph at Headquarters. She was questioned once in the Slag about a holdup. I'll just take her along."

He reached for her arm—and the sough of Haver's smash-gun flame roared between them. An inch to the right and the colonel's hand would have vanished from his wrist.

Mart Havers laughed in sudden reckless excitement. He swung his two guns authoritatively.

"All right—back up!" he said, his voice strange in his own ears because of that joyful recklessness that seemed to close his throat.

He didn't have time to wonder about it. He had never known quite this stimulation in his other conflicts, this intoxicating happiness that was like feeling an intolerable burden rolled from his shoulders. He was almost disappointed at the ease with which he carried the venture off. For every other man in the room was backing carefully in obedience to the swinging guns. They all knew what a smash-ray can do. They respected those blunt, flattened muzzles.

"Georgina, get behind me," Havers said. "You by the door—inside here. Quick!"

Stepping carefully, he edged his way around the wall, backing toward the door, hearing Georgina's rustling skirts and the patter of her feet as she moved behind the shelter of his broad cloaked shoulders. He heard the door creak as she opened it.

He didn't dare look around, but for one instant of inexplicable disappointment he thought, "I'm going to make it! They aren't even going to fight!"

Then something crashed against the back of his head that was like lightning made tangible, and time slowed up to a series of infinite seconds, a chain of them, one dropping leisurely from the next.

He had time to be aware of everything that happened. He saw the open mouths of the guards, their stares, the look of satisfaction on the colonel's face. Havers felt his own muscles go limp, the heavy guns dropping from his hands and taking an immeasurable time to strike the floor. He felt his knees buckle and saw the floor tilt up in his face, but slowly, slowly.

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Inside his head, thoughts moved in lightning contrast to the slowed and dimming world. "Georgina's getting away," he thought, because he could hear her scurrying feet and no scream to announce her capture. Then he thought, "She'll never make it—La Boucherie's going to hate this." And just before the lights went out entirely, he knew a great deal more about himself, in one flash, than he had known when the blow struck his skull.

This was what he had wanted, unconsciously, all along. The explicit death-wish that had haunted him for years now and had come so near the surface on his way here. "La Boucherie will hate this!" That was the most important thing in the world, revenge on the man who had made his life what it was. An intolerable life, pointless, a failure from start to finish, hatred grinding him from task to fruitless task and hating him the more for his inevitable failures, because under hatred he was incapable of success. The death-wish had a double source—revenge and escape. Personal escape into oblivion, if need be.

That was the reason for his exultant joy in this one fight of all the fights in his life, and the reason for his disappointment when he thought he had succeeded. It was the reason, he knew suddenly, why he had come to Georgina's defense even though he had no more emotional ties there. Until this last vanishing moment he had not even thought that if she were exposed, then he as her brother would be exposed too. It had been sheer reaction against La Boucherie that had brought the guns to his hands.

He could not have known that twenty-five years ago his father had performed the same pattern of behavior, pulling smash-guns from beneath the web-shielded cloak and going down before the onslaught of the Leaders and their men.

IN THAT first combat, Mart Havers had entered into his exile in La Boucherie's skilled but blundering hands. In this second combat, following the pattern to its end, Mart Havers stepped out of exile and into his heritage again, though he could not have guessed it as the twenty-five-year cycle closed and the lights went out and the floor came up to receive his collapsing body. . . .

This was oblivion. It was what he must have longed for over a period of many increasing years, this vast, relaxing grayness. This pleasant, endless, empty dream.

But then the lights began—no, sounds, words, questions that echoed and reechoed until his resting brain stirred into reluctant answer. But only a part of it. The censor slept on in his mind, but the paths where knowledge had imprinted itself in his brain lay open and answering to the skillful questions that came out of the dark.

"Who is Georgina Curtis?"

He told them. Why not? Nothing was important now. He was not even thinking.

"When did you first meet her?"

He told them that, too. Questions and answer went on and on, while the clouds of his slumber began to stir and seethe with a slow turmoil.

"Who? La Boucheire? Kennard La Boucherie?"

"Yes. Yes."

"When did you first meet Kennard La Boucherie?"

And some miles away across town La Boucherie was packing in angry haste,

[*Turn page*]

Kidneys Must Remove Excess Acids

Help 15 Miles of Kidney Tubes Flush Out Poisonous Waste

If you have an excess of acids in your blood, your 15 miles of kidney tubes may be overworked. These tiny filters and tubes are working day and night to help Nature rid your system of excess acids and poisonous waste.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Kidneys may need help the same as bowels, so ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 50 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

(Adv.)

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shooting questions at the frightened Georgina as he worked. It was his own fault, this catastrophe. He was fair enough to know it. He had let anger override his judgment and sent Havers off on a job as dangerous to La Boucherie and the Freemen organization as it was to Havers himself, because in his brain Havers carried, willy nilly, the safety of them all.

Twenty-five years before as John Havershам had died on the hospital steps he had ignited a time-fuse with the blast of his smash-guns which set off this explosion a quarter of a century later. La Boucherie knew it. Too late, he recognized in his own mind the slow growth of the hatred which had culminated in his sending Havers to his own doom and the doom of them all.

"He did it for me!" Georgina was sobbing. "I didn't realize—I never knew he cared so much. It was all my fault. I know it was!"

"Shut up," La Boucherie said. "Hand me that box. Quick, girl!"

"What do you think they're doing to him now?"

Georgina blindly offered him the wrong item, and La Boucherie slapped it out of her hand with a growl. His nerves were cushioned under protective layers of fat, but this emergency had penetrated deep and made them vibrate to every petty annoyance.

"He'll be right in the middle of the Purge, spilling everything he knows," La Boucherie told her savagely. "Names and dates and places. Yours, mine. Everything. Guards may be on their way here now. If you can't help, get out of my way."

He lumbered across the room to ring for a porter.

"I think I've got about half an hour," he said. "Stop that crying and pull yourself together. Even a porter might be suspicious today, if he saw you. Hurry, now. We've got to get out of here fast."

They made it with fifteen minutes to spare.

CHAPTER VIII

The Purge

THE Purge was always efficient, but the psychologists who administered it to Mart Havers took time to marvel to one another at its super-efficiency in this one case. Fascinating things always emerged under narcosynthesis, from every criminal mind that was treated, but usually the things followed an accepted pattern. With Mart Havers there were startling developments.

It was hard to believe. Kennard La Boucherie had never been suspected of subversiveness, and the Freemen were thought a dead issue long ago. But the trail led straight from the comparatively innocent matter of Georgina, questioned as a witness to a Slag robbery, to La Boucherie and the Freemen and the vast underground organization that was moving so carefully toward success after the crippling pogrom of twenty-five years past.

They had to believe Havers. No one lies under narcosynthesis. There would be checks, of course, careful investigations. Meanwhile the information poured out, under the skilled questioning of the phychologists. They learned of La Boucherie's long-term plans, and the paths they were so deviously followingly toward a point still years away when the Freemen could strike in safe hope of victory. They learned of the Aleutian hideout and of many others.

But they learned only what Mart Havers knew. La Boucherie had not by any means told him everything.

When everything that questions could elicit had emerged at last, it was time to examine the source from which they had come—Mart Havers himself, the individual organism. And what they found surprised them almost as much as the earlier material about the Freemen.

For clearly this was a potential Leader. Mart Havers had known vaguely the story of his kidnaping and his background. But the investigators needed no such reminder to tell them what potential dynamite they had here in this remarkable brain. Leader material was not so plentiful they could afford to waste it.

With interest and enthusiasm they went to work on Mart Havers. . . .

The next four months were a blank in Mart Havers' memory.

The Cromwellian technicians were skillful. Even though certain lines of research were forbidden, other fields were left wide open, and parapsychology was a science immensely valuable to this civilization. The Leaders ruled only as long as they could rule. And psychology is far more powerful even than

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an atomic bomb, because it can stop the bomb from going off or being made in the first place.

They didn't change his name. There was no need to erase his mind completely and imprint new memories upon it. Selectivity was necessary. What they did was to dissect Mart Havers' ego, laying his mind open with drugs and hypnosis, and spreading out the material like a complicated aerial map.

He didn't know it. He couldn't have resisted neo-pentothal and Gestalt probing and all the other weapons they used. He was a guinea pig, and they took his mind apart, kept what they wanted, and removed the rest.

They removed it by burying it. It went from the conscious mind into the unconscious, that deep, turgid well that opens in the mind of every man. Complete erasure was impossible, unless they worked with the electronic patterns of pure thought, and they could not do that—yet. But on the writing in Havers' brain they used ink eradicator, in effect, so that it was no longer visible, even to Mart Havers. Many of his memories faded into invisibility.

Then they wrote new sentences in his mind.

From an electrician's viewpoint, they rewired Mart Havers so that from now on he would operate on AC instead of DC. The psychic drive was different. His basic motivations had been altered. He was the same man, but now he would run on another type of current.

It took time. The process had to be geared to Havers' strength. Years ago, when the process had first been used, too hasty treatment had often resulted in insanity or death. When a man faces an insoluble problem he may go mad, and two types of minds—radically opposed —in the same skull means ethical anode and cathode. So the siphoning was done most carefully these days. As one reservoir was gradually emptied, the other was as gradually filled.

And, in the end, Mart Havers was a Cromwellian. . . .

HE DIDN'T have amnesia at all. True, he had forgotten some things, key events that had shaped his character. And other, non-existent events had been substituted, to fit his new character logically. But he was Mart Havers.

A Cromwellian.

While they were at it, they checked his capabilities. At birth he had had Leader potentialities, though no one could tell whether a new-born infant would be an electronics expert or a geopolitician. Environment shaped that. Havers' environment had subtly shaped him, and the tests showed the job at which he would be most competent. So they put memories of technical training in his mind, too, and he came out of the Purge a fully qualified Weather Patrolman—qualified except for practical experience.

After that, he was assigned to Weather Patrol, and liked it.

The mind, like Nature, has a check and balance system. The psychologists had taken away Havers' memories of Georgina and La Boucherie, and had given him nothing in place of the emotions he had felt toward those two. It wasn't as simple as love or hatred; emotions are blended composites. But there was a lack now in Mart Havers' psyche, and his super-ego did something about that.

It was inevitable that the gap had to be filled. It was accident that he met Daniele Vaughan and Andre Kelvin.

He met Daniele first. Another man would probably have overlooked the potentialities of her beauty, for she was one of the rare Female Leaders, and was bound by the traditional rule of "uglification." The Cromwellians ruled by giving their slaves a lesser race to rule in turn—the female of the species, degraded to a pretty, helpless, useless group without any purpose in life except to preen themselves for the males. So the Leaders were mostly men.

Sometimes, however, female babies exhibited Leader potentialities. It was not safe to let them grow up as ordinary women. They would be rebellious, lacking a natural outlet for their capabilities. These were trained as Leaders, but with a difference. You couldn't be a Leader—and a woman!

Daniele wore gray, skilfully tailored so that she looked awkward and mannish in it. Her hair was done up in an unbecoming huddle, and her lips and cheeks had never known rouge or lipstick. Daniele Vaughan was a Leader technician on the lab staff of Weather Control, and it was her job to teach Havers the practical application of certain knowledge already implanted in his brain. She taught him capably, but not as a woman.

Hypnosis had given him a great stock pile

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of references. He knew what was meant by the lapse rate—the vertical temperature gradient—and the difference between dry adiabatic and saturated-adiabatic. He knew how to use the cup anemometer and theodolite-equipped balloons. He knew that Beaufort Number 5 was little more than a moderate wind, and above Beaufort Number 10 the real danger began. He understood isobars and anticyclones and, in theory, he was a Weather Patrolman.

But he needed the practical experience, and he got part of it in the laboratory, working with Daniele Vaughan.

For the first time he enjoyed working at a profession. The harsh, relentless pressure of La Boucherie's watchfulness was gone, and instead there was a real new psychic drive, which left no room for rebellion.

Why should the new Mart Havers rebel? He had a chance for advancement; he was serving the period of apprenticeship that every unfledged Leader must serve before he became a Leader—and that was enough. True, there had been considerable discussion before the authorities decided to admit Havers to the closely guarded Leader ranks, but there was no arguing with the results of the psychological tests. Mental ability made a Leader, and Mart Havers had that.

False memories had been implanted. Havers didn't know he had taken the Purge. He soldom bothered to wonder about his previous life. There was a reason—a mental bloc the psychologists had placed in his mind, so he wouldn't wonder too much. That was insurance against conflict between his new conscious mind and the secrets, now forgotten, buried in his unconscious.

He worked with Daniele. He didn't regard her as a woman. But she regarded him as a man, because she had never known another man like him. Havers' harsh early life had left ineradicable traces.

They were charting a polar front. Daniele sat back in her chair and nodded at Havers.

"All right," she said. "Suppose you tell me. See how much you've learned in six weeks."

Havers studied the map. It told him something, but not enough. A cold wave was advancing, there would be variations in pressure. Perhaps a storm near the border. That didn't matter. But—

HE FOUND another, larger, map and plotted the weather with swift accuracy. Daniele watched him, her gray eyes unreadable.

Havers laughed.

"Don't break it," he said. "Not at this time of year. There may be a mild storm in Dakota, but that doesn't matter."

"Why?"

"The coastal fruit crop," he told her. "Hot days, cold nights. Too cold for this time of year. The growers need a cloud blanket to save their crops."

"How?"

This was rote. "Noctural clouds will reflect the outgoing radiation from the ground at night, after a hot day. The heat will just bounce back and forth between the ground and the clouds all night long, instead of being dissipated into space, which would let the crops freeze. That's why we don't want to break up the storm before it gets far enough south. Satisfied?"

She nodded briefly. "That's enough for today," she said, rising and yawning. "I'm tired. From now on it's routine, anyway, and only a few more days of it. You're going out on Patrol Wednesday, aren't you?"

"That's right. Patrol Fifty-one."

"Oh?" she said, an odd note in her voice. "Well, you'll have a good captain over you. Clean up the lab before you turn in. Good night."

She went out, her shoulders sagging tiredly. Havers looked after her for a moment, and then whistling, went to work. He worked slowly. His mind was full of the new project—the field experience to be gained on actual Patrol duty.

It was an exciting job, a glamorous one, and a vital one. Ever since mankind had first made his epochal step toward controlling the weather in 1946, when Vincent Shaefer dropped six pounds of dry ice through a cloud, supercooling and precipitating it, Earth had begun to be a little more under control of its dominant race. Weather could be controlled!

To those who had survived smashing hurricanes, torrential floods, frigid cold snaps, baking arid spells, and the thousand other vagaries that any planet must have, unless it is a perfectly smooth surface of either land or water, revolving on an upright instead of a tilted ecliptic, weather control had been a miracle.

Even in 1946 and 1947 it had been possible to predict the future. Not the immediate future, perhaps, but soon—soon.

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A farmer could raise delicate crops and be sure that a snowstorm wouldn't ruin it, because the storm could be precipitated before it reached him, in some area where snowfall would be harmless, or even beneficial, if the snows could be used to replenish a watershed. It meant the virtual end of droughts. It meant that great cities and transportation systems would never again be snowbound and immobilized.

Even in 1947 that could be foreseen, and today Earth was more nearly Eden, climatically speaking, than it had been since the prehistoric days when weather could be predicted for two thousand years ahead, because there were no land surfaces to cause variations. The particular ecology had been balanced. Man controlled the weather.

Not easily, and not completely. There were still catastrophes at times, And always an unceasing vigilance had to be maintained against the ancient, inhuman foe that sent out attack after attack from the birthplace of the storms. It was a never-ending war against an enemy with infinite resources.

An enemy whose voice was thunder. Whose sword was the lightning. That implacable foe whose bludgeon was the hurricane itself. No wonder the Weather Patrol was glamorous, pitted against the most powerful force that had ever existed in the world.

As the planet rolled ceaselessly around its tremendous spiral, it gave birth every hour to a god greater than Zeus, greater than his allies, the Cyclopes who ruled the thunder and lightning, and the Hecatonchires, the hundred-handed monsters who shook the Earth.

Down from the Pole rolled the storms, and up to meet the ancient gods of wind and darkness flashed the jet-planes of the Weather Patrol—the Storm Smashers.

CHAPTER IX

Daniele Vaughan, Leader

IT WAS at times like this, in the rare moments when he was alone, that Mart Havers had trouble with his memories. Mostly his work was planned to give him small opportunity for introspection. But he was beginning to realize, in a dim, half-remembering way, that his own past was too vague.

He had memories of boyhood in an institute for orphans—the mnemonic experts had tried to parallel the real facts as closely as possible—and of adolescence and adulthood training for this job. But there was a curious quality of—thinness? Emptiness? He could not quite identify it. He only knew a bloc in his mind kept him from looking back closely, or from wanting to look back. He knew this was not normal, and it bothered him.

The job they had done on his mind was not perfect. For one reason, his mind itself was of a more complicated fabric than the experts had ever before worked on. No one of Leader calibre had needed such alteration until Havers came along. Basically they had succeeded. He now believed wholeheartedly in the Cromwellian cause, in their credo and their sets of rules. He believed because of a long chain of interlocking pseudo-experiences carefully implanted in his memory.

But there were empty places they had not filled. There were depths they had not been able to reach. And in these hollows a vacuum existed that strove to fill itself and sent little whirlpools of nameless discontent upward to the surface of his mind.

Georgina had left such a hollow.

He found Daniele Vaughan's identification disc while he was straightening the laboratory that night. Trailing a length of fine broken chain, it lay beneath the chair where she had sat. He picked it up and studied the flat, cryptic symbols that told so little about Daniele Vaughan. Well, she would need the medallion in the morning. He had better return it.

It might be another thousand years before man begun to understand fully the complicated colloid of the human brain. As Havers stood before the door of Daniele's suite a curious current stirred in his mind. He could not have traced it to its source, and the solemn psychologists who had laid out the artificial patterns of his brain were helpless, too, when they left those vacuum spots—but Havers was unconsciously ready tonight for what lay before him.

A cool night wind moved gently through the half-open door. He could hear soft footsteps inside.

He rang, and Daniele's pleasant, impersonal voice called:

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"Is it you, Mega? Come in. I've been expecting you."

He obeyed before he realized that she was not talking to Mart Havers.

The room was broad and high, carpeted in deep blue, and dim except for the reading light in the far corner, falling from a fashionably ornate spiral fluorescent made like a flowering vine. There were record books on the low table beside the chair, and a familiar pair of reading-glasses lay upon them. Not for Daniele was the vanity of contact lenses.

For a moment he did not see her. Then her voice came again and he turned toward the tall windows through which moonlight came strongly, and the brilliant glow that was Chicago outside, a jewel-case towering up into the starry heavens and mingling its stars with theirs.

Chicago? He was puzzled for a second. It should have been another city. Reno? No, it couldn't be Reno. He had never seen Reno, surely. He searched his shallow memory and found no clue.

"Mega?" the gentle voice from the balcony inquired. "Who is it?"

Then Daniele came into the open glass doors and stood there staring, and for an instant Mart Havers was speechless.

If it had not been for that pleasant soft voice he would never have known her. The blue and the pastels in this room might have given him a hint that it had been decorated for a blonde, and in their private quarters even women Leaders had a free hand.

But to say "blonde" was not to describe Daniele Vaughan with any justice. It was so delicate and elusive a fairness that no flamboyance in her struck the eye. Her hair which was braided tight all day under the severe laboratory cap flowed now in a smooth stream like white molten metal over one shoulder and nearly to her waist. She was lifting it with both hands against her ears, holding the heavy stream away from her head, when she first saw Havers. And for a moment she was speechless, too.

Then she laughed and said, "I thought you were my hairdresser. I'm sorry. You see my secret. Even a female Leader can be too vain to cut her hair."

HE WAS not even aware then he had not answered her. He was staring with new vision at the delicate, serene face framed in the ash-blond hair. It was the same face he had seen daily for a long while, but . . . No, not the same at all. Subtle differences too elusive to name had wrought an indefinable change in her. That ritual "uglification" meant among other things a face tinted to a monotone with careful emphasis on the wrong features.

But now the make-up was gone and Daniele's wild-rose coloring against the background of her skillfully colored room all but took Havers' breath away. And under the carefully shapeless uniform which was her daily dress had been hidden a body as lovely as her face. The tightly girdled robe she wore now made no secret of it.

One of the whirlpools which had been troubling the surface of Mart Havers' mind slowed imperceptibley, began to still. Deep down under it an emptiness from which it had risen was filling itself as he stood gazing at Daniele Vaughan.

"You—I never knew it, but you're beautiful." He was surprised to hear his own words.

She smiled. "No. Passably pretty, that's all. It's just the contrast from the way I have to look all day. Really, Havers, you shouldn't be here. What do you want?"

He stepped inside, closed the door, put his broad back against it. Under the heavy black brows he grinned at her deliberately.

"I just want to look at you. That's all."

"Don't be impertinent, Havers." The wild-rose coloring deepened a little.

"Don't be selfish, Vaughan!" He was surprised at his own sudden daring. He did not question it. He let the words come as they would. "You've been cheating me all these weeks. Now let me look."

She swept the stream of pale molten hair off her shoulder, tossing it down her back with a quick motion of her bare uplifted arm. Then she came forward resolutely and reached for the door.

"Outside, Havers. I don't want to report you, but—"

He seized the wrist that reached past him, pulling her a little off balance, so that he had an excuse to put out his other arm and catch her. For the first time he was aware of how delicately small she was in contrast to his height and bulk.

She put both hands on his arm to steady herself. Calmly she looked up into his face.

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Havers," she said quietly. "You're forgetting something."

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"I'm just discovering something," he contradicted her, grinning.

"This is exactly the reason I have to dress the way I do," she told him, making her voice dispassionate. "You see? The moment you find I'm a woman you treat me like any little fluffy fool you've known outside the lab. All women needn't be morons—it's only a fashion. Don't think you're flattering me when you act this way, Havers. I don't like it. Let me go."

For an instant the muscles of his arm trembled and he thought he was going to tighten that embrace in which he half held her. She thought so too. She looked up at him in silence, and the color deepened in her face, and her lips parted in a protest she did not voice. They were quiet for what seemed like a long moment, and in the air between them a sudden unspoken emotion vibrated, too formless to name, perhaps too dangerous to name. But as real as the air they breathed.

He could have kissed her. He meant to. He could see she expected that he would. But the justice of what she had just said came to him more fully in every second he delayed, and whatever jaunty intoxication had come over him in recognition of her beauty, and reaction to it, chilled in his mind.

Slowly he let her go.

She stepped back, her eyes still upon his in an almost searching look. For Daniele had never known anyone like this man, and there were undercurrents between them now that frightened and fascinated them both.

"I'm sorry," Havers said to her, surprised to find his voice a little unsteady and his breath coming faster than usual. "You're right. I expect I'm a fool. Forget it, if you—if you're willing."

She lifted her brows at him.

"No!" he said rapidly, in answer to that query. "Don't forget it. That was a kiss, whether I took it or not. Remember that." There was no coquetry about her.

"I know it was. I will remember. But—"

THE ring of the doorbell interrupted whatever she was about to say. She frowned and glanced at the door.

"Mega," she said softly.

"I'll go. I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry. But you'll have to go, of course."

"May I come back later?"

She put her hand to her cheek and lifted the heavy hair away, pulling her head back with it. Without looking at him she shook her head, making the pale stream swing upon her shoulders.

"Why not?"

"You're due for Patrol duty next week," she said obliquely, not meeting his eyes. "Right? Do you know your assignment?"

"Patrol Fifty-one. Captain Kelvin."

"Andre Kelvin," she said gently. "Andre's a wonderful person. We're going to be married next year."

Havers opened his mouth and then closed it again. In the silence the bell rang again, and this time he did not interfere when she reached to open the door. But just before the handle turned in her fingers he said;

"No. I warned you that was a kiss. I expect there'll be others, more tangible. I won't take Andre Kelvin for an answer."

She smiled. She pulled the door open.

"Come in, Mega," she said. "You're late. Havers—good night."

The door closed quietly behind him.

CHAPTER X

Weather Patrol

CAPTAIN ANDRE KELVIN said, "We've got two jobs. We don't need a jet-plane for the first one, but we do for the second. Stratosphere work."

The crew of five men were in an office attached to the hangers. Mart Havers, in the blue-and-gold uniform of Weather Patrol, stood with the others, at ease, watching the blackboard over which Kelvin's pointer hovered. He switched his gaze to the Captain.

Andre Kelvin was a tall, long-boned, rangy man, with blond hair and a deceptively young face.

"The first job is to bust a cloud over the Canadian Rockies," he said now. "That's a cinch. The second one needs more explaining, though you've been briefed already. But I'll run over the main points. The sun's corona has been acting up. It takes a coronagraph with a birefringent filter to make the predictions we need, but that's been done. Electrons are going to blast into the upper

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atmosphere at a high rate—solar-generated electrons. That's nothing new. But we've orders to make analytical recordings of the effects of that electronic bombardment on artificial meteors. Got that?"

His eyes rested on Havers, the new man. Havers nodded.

"Know what artificial meteors are?"

"Slugs loaded into rockets that explode only at high altitudes."

"Yeah. They go fast—seven miles a second. They'll be watched from Earth and photographed with telescopic equipment for study, but we want to get close photographs, without any intervening troposphere. These slugs aren't iron. Some of them are fissionable isotopes. They're testing all sorts of effects this time."

"What's this got to do with Weather Patrol?" one man asked.

"Weather Control depends on communication, like most tech-systems," Kelvin explained. "Solar storms can mess up teleradio plenty. And solar radiation has a lot to do with the weather directly, too. The more the astrophysicists find out about the sun, the farther ahead weather predictions can be made, allowing for the variables that mess us up sometimes. Now—we'll wear thermosuits, just in case. I don't think one of the rockets will hit us. They're aimed carefully, and our route's laid out in advance. But you never know. Remember—don't take chances topside." Again he looked at Havers. "That's all. Let's jet."

He led the way out to the field.

Following him, Havers turned the last words in his mind. Was that coincidence, or was the man warning him obliquely to stay away from Daniele? He thought it was coincidence. He had seen Daniele only briefly since that night,and never alone. She was as remote and impersonal with him as ever, but now and again their eyes would meet and for on instant hold a remembering stare. She was not pretending the episode had never taken place. She was simply dismissing it.

Deliberately Havers put the memory of her out of his mind. If Andre Kelvin knew what had happened—well, that didn't matter either. Warning or no warning, Havers knew what he meant to do, when the time came. Meanwhile, there was work to be done.

He followed Kelvin toward the plane. . . .

It's easy to retrain a man after the Purge. There are psychic blocs in his mind; he misses certain of his memories, and he doesn't like to think about those gaps. He concentrates completely upon the work on hand, giving it his fullest attention—which is why Mart Havers, who had already assimilated the technical training, was able to pick up the field experiences with surprising ease.

Jet-planes move fast. They had to use a precision bomb-sight in order to hit the clouds over the Canadian Rockies before they were jetting above the Pacific, and it was impossible to tell with the naked eye whether they had succeeded. But the relayed television shots told them. The pounds of dry ice smashed into the cloud belt, exploding vaporous blasts toward the upper tropopause, and the dry ice broke the deadlock of super-cooling that wouldn't let the droplets of vapor freeze. From the created ice seeds grew snowflakes instantly, and as precipitation occured, snow poured on the Canadian Rockies.

The fall would replenish the watershed there, and would save southern agricultural areas, in the path of the storm, from blighted crops.

That was the first job. It was routine. Jet-planes weren't necessary for a simple snow-making task, but Weather Control was killing two birds at once.

Mart Havers, by the captain's order, sat beside Kelvin at the control board, which supervised the activities of the entire crew. Kelvin spoke to the pilot through the microphone, and slanted a glance at Havers.

"Know why we're climbing?" he asked.

"Well, this is a stratosphere job."

"Sorry. I meant, do you know why we haven't begun to accelerate yet?"

HAVERS considered that. There was acceleration, plenty of it, but nothing at all compared to the possibilities this plane held.

Kelvin made a few deft gestures at his control board. "We've got trapezoidic wings," he remarked, apparently at random.

"Oh," Havers said. "The trans-sonic wall."

"Give. Details."

"Speed of sound is seven hundred and sixty-one m. p. h. Supersonic's a thousand m. p. h. and up. Between those speeds you get the trans-sonic wall, where air conditions are fouled up. Props, wings, airfoils don't

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react normally. The shock waves can tear a ship to pieces in seconds when you hit the wall."

"And?"

"Trapezoidic wings stabilize the center of pressure during the shift-over. That helps. But it helps to climb above the cirrus level, too, into the base of the stratosphere, where density's less and shock waves aren't so intense. When you get high enough, you can crack the wall safely. We'll need supersonic speeds, I guess, to be able to keep track of those artificial meteors."

"What's the worst point of the wall?"

"Six hundred and fifty to nine hundred m. p. h. That's when the standing sound wave can step in."

Neither man needed to explain the dangers of compressibility. As long as air flows smoothly over the polished hide of a jet-propelled plane, there is no danger. But when you begin to hit 650 m. p. h., the demon of the air uses a microscope to find flaws. Bullets and gas blasts can interrupt the smooth air flow, and even a squash bug on the edge of a wing can wreck a plane, once the sound waves start hammering.

So they found a new alloy that had all the qualities they needed, and planes were redesigned. Even then it was safer to hit the stratosphere before climbing into sonic speeds. Above the wall it was easy riding, comparatively speaking. But first you had to get over the wall.

That meant smart piloting. A smooth, straight course, because the least wavering might be catastrophic. Robot controls were safer than human pilots, and Havers saw that the robot pilot had taken over now. They were nearing the wall.

Every man abroad let out his breath the moment the green light flashed from the ceiling. This time they were safe.

It was Mart Havers' real introducton to the Weather Patrol. No implanted memories, no lab-tech training could hope to indicate the scope of Weather Control. No wonder this was the most glamorous job on Earth or above it, Mart thought, as he watched the blazing glory of an alien world unfold upon the vision screens. The only real adventure left in mankind.

The sky was black, dead black, beyond the clustered brilliance of the stars and planets. The sun's corona made a jagged ring of white fire against that ultimate night. And from the distant Earth came rocket after rocket, exploding into showers of blood-red and silver-white meteors, while the jet-plane swung in tremendous circles, shaken with its own thunder, the blast of its jets streaming like the blade of a sword of fire behind it.

So, amid the chaos of man-made creation, Mart Havers had his initiation. . . .

The weeks and months slipped past. Gradually, imperceptibly, Mart's psych became adjusted and reoriented. There were periods spent in the tech-labs, but he preferred flight duty. He learned to apply the knowledge implanted in his brain. Over the Alps he battled the Föhn, and on the other side of the planet he met the same dry air mass where it was called the Chinook.

He flew Weather Patrol from the Horse Latitudes through the Southeast Trades, and beyond, and back again. He learned to play the clouds like a complicated instrument, to bring the results ordered by his superiors. He jetted beyond the stratosphere and drove through the burning Borealis, in the ionosphere itself, and he helped battle a Beaufort 10 wind, which is not quite a typhoon.

The Cromwellian psychologists had been wise to provide Purged men with an engrossing objective. His work kept Mart Havers reasonably happy, except for the occasional moments of queer restlessness and emptiness that came apparently without cause. He found himself thinking more and more of Daniele Vaughan.

IF HE had wanted to forget her it would not have been possible, for she was still his official mentor and checked twice a week with him, either by televisor or in person, if he were not out on patrol duty. Since she could have asked to have him transferred to another mentor, he concluded that she too found their meetings too interesting to drop. Impersonal as she remained, he knew she remembered. She allowed him to be sure of that.

And their acquaintance grew. They found similar tastes, they compared dislikes and reactions, they built up the usual code of private jokes and references that grow between two people working regularly on a congenial job together.

Though nothing ever happened that Andre Kelvin could have found fault with, though every word and gesture between them had complete impersonality, yet there was a

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growing undercurrent of intimacy which flowed stronger and stronger with every meeting. Each was willing to wait—but a climax built slowly up as time went on, toward some explosion still in the future, which neither could yet be sure about.

Under other circumstances, Havers would probably have liked Andre Kelvin without reservation. They worked together pleasantly enough. Kelvin was a casual man who could tighten into an efficient machine when need arose, as it did arise one day, bringing still another set of subterranean conflicts in Mart Havers' mind to a sudden crisis.

CHAPTER XI

A Serious Problem

KELVIN had called the crew into his office for briefing.

"New orders," he told them when they had settled down. "No definite time yet, but zero may come any time from now on. It depends on whether that cold over Maine breaks up, and the Shetland-Faroes High, and a lot of other things. We've got to strike at exactly the right moment."

"Stratosphere job?" someone asked.

"I don't think so. The tech-lab has several plans worked out, but nobody's sure which one we'll use. By the look of the sky, though, I'd say Plan Two."

Kelvin nodded toward the wall, where four huge charts had been set up. They looked complicated, with the intricate details of isobars, isotherms, an occluded depression moving southward, and the curving shadows of the rain belts, but Mart read the maps' meanings as easily now as Kelvin himself did. He looked again at Plan Two, and his mouth tightened slightly.

The captain was still talking. Havers brought back his thoughts from the formless places where they were straying and tried to listen. He could not concentrate. The best he could do was keep silent and pretend to be attentive until Kelvin had finished and asked:

"Any questions?"

There were none.

"Okay. You're alerted. Don't leave the field."

The crew went out, but Havers didn't follow. Kelvin had turned back to the work on his desk, but he looked up and caught Mart's eye.

It came out unexpectedly, before Havers knew what he was saying.

"Count me out."

Kelvin looked across the desk for a puzzled second. Then he got up and went across the room to a window. He stood looking out, his back to Havers.

"I don't get it," he said.

Oddly enough, neither did Mart. He was trying to search into those darkened corners of his brain, those blocked-off passages, trying to understand why he felt this inexplicable, importunate pressure.

"I—I don't want this job," he said, his voice a little unsteady. "That's all. You've got other crewmen."

Kelvin turned. "Look," he said, "Everybody gets cold feet, even old hands, in Weather Patrol. The worst thing you can do is give in to it. The stratosphere jet jobs are a lot more dangerous than this. It's routine. I'll shift you to another post in the ship."

"I said count me out."

The captain rubbed his jaw. He studied Havers.

"I can't do that," he said. "Believe me, I've had the same feelings myself. It's nothing to get excited about. Only there's discipline."

Havers was still trying to open the locked doors in his mind. They would not stir, no matter how desperately he tried. He drew a long shuddering breath.

"The devil with discipline," he said, and turned around and went out. . . .

Daniele Vaughan called him on the visor in his quarters. Mart didn't get up from the edge of the bed where he was sitting, smoking a cigarette that had no taste. He flipped on the switch and said "yeah."

"What's wrong?" she asked him.

Mart scowled into the visor screen. "So Captain Andre Kelvin told you all about it, eh?"

"Certainly he did," Daniele said calmly. "He doesn't want to get you in a mess. If he'd reported you through channels, you might be in real trouble."

"You weren't due to call me till tomorrow."

"I know. I'll call you tomorrow. Then I can make out my routine report on your progress. But I'm calling you now so we can thrash this out and have a good report tomorrow."

Havers grimaced. Daniele looked at him in

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the visor screen with a faintly worried air.

"I don't understand this, Mart," she said. "Don't you like Patrol work? Is that it?"

"No. I like the work."

"Then why refuse to go out on patrol?"

Havers crushed his cigarette between finger and thumb and threw it across the room.

"I don't know!" he snapped. "I don't know why! Let it go at that."

"For some reason I don't understand," Daniele said, "the top men are interested in following your progress. They don't tell me their secrets, but I can guess it would be a lot better for you to steer a straight course than go off beam at this point. As a matter of fact, I ought to report your conduct immediately. I should have done it before I vised you. But Mart—go on back to Andre and—"

"Apologize?"

"You should know him better than that. He doesn't want an apology. I'll vise him myself. Shall I? It's a routine flight, Mart, after all."

Havers put his hand to his forehead, as though to still the sudden ache that had begun to pound there. Locked doors, locked doors . . . And somewhere, somehow, a pressure he could not understand and could not resist.

"I can't do it," he said hoarsely. "I—can't make that flight. I *can't do it!*"

HIS orders came through two hours later. Havers didn't see Kelvin before he left. He simply gave his uniform a few careless touches and went out to the field where a jet-plane waited—for him. He was no longer trying to open locked doors or even to think. Temporarily, he had given up. The problem was too difficult, especially since he couldn't even understand its nature.

It was as though a trans-sonic wall had risen in his brain, and he could not pass it without cracking up. But it was more tangible than the airy hammer of that wall of speed. It was a solid barrier that had risen within his mind.

He could not pass that barrier. He knew that he could not make the flight Kelvin planned. But whenever he asked himself why, there was only darkness and turmoil and an unanswerable question.

So he gave up. Let the higher-ups do what they wanted to him. It was better than trying to resolve his own problems.

Automatically he checked the cloud masses and found himself trying to predict tomorrow's weather as the plane roared southwest.

Reno was the destination. This wasn't too surprising, since the Nevada city had become one of the key spots for the leading Cromwellians. As the plane decelarated Havers noticed the sprawling squalor of the Slag, a spilled ink-blot beside the jeweled brightness of Reno.

Sight of the Slag stirred nothing at all in his memory.

The trip through Mnemonic Center did arouse a slight feeling of familiarity, though. He couldn't localize it, but once or twice he thought that something like this had happened before. When he asked questions, one of the psychologists brushed him off with a reference to the *déjà vu* phenomenon, and he learned nothing.

Nor did he understand the purpose of the tests he underwent. They would not tell him, and after a time he didn't bother to ask. He went with sullen submissiveness from one gadget to another, apparently a responsive patient, but not quite as obedient as he seemed. A small seed of rebellion began to grow within him.

Before it had time to sprout, the doors of Mnemonic Center closed behind him. He was conducted to a great building towering in the center of Reno, and taken up in an elevator to the roof.

The apartment there was slightly palatial. So was the great room Havers entered, alone, at one end of his journey. The farther wall was a huge transparent curve of glass, through which could be seen the lights of Reno, beginning to appear as the sun dropped behind Tahoe.

The man standing looking out turned as Havers came in, and at his gesture luminous incandescents glowed into being high up on the walls. He was tall, thin, and dark—hair, eyes, and swarthy complexion. Only the smoothness of his movement saved him from seeming awkward. What Havers noticed first was that he seemed very, very tired.

His voice was tired too.

"Hello, Havers," he said. "Please sit down. My name's Llewelyn."

Alexis Llewelyn, the mnemonics expert, the Leader. Mart had heard of him, since he was one of the highest of the top Cromwellians. He sat down warily, keeping his eyes steady on Llewelyn.

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"Relax," the Leader said. "Smoke? Drink? I won't say this is off the record, because it isn't, but I wanted to have a talk with you for a number of reasons. Those machines at the Center are competent, of course, but there are intangibles a machine can never catch." He paused, frowning at some obscure thought, and then came back to Havers with a start. "You can stop worrying. I know more about your case than you do. Perhaps more than anybody else. And don't ask me to explain that. I may, some time, but not now. The main thing is—why did you refuse to take on that routine Weather Patrol flight."

Mart lay back in his chair, feeling as tired as Llewelyn looked.

"I don't know," he said. "That's all. I don't know."

The Leader nodded. "Fine, if it's true. Or perhaps not. A good deal depends . . . Unfortunately we can't tell you all the circumstances, for rather important reasons, but I will tell you this. You'll be watched and checked for the next few days. I want you to react normally. That's your best out. Nothing unpleasant will happen to you under any circumstances, but we've got to know your normal reactions, so go ahead and do what you feel like doing. It'll be all right."

The tired voice sounded reassuring.

"I wish I could be sure it'd be all right," Havers said. "I—I don't know."

"Don't worry about it. I think I know something of what's going on in your mind. Well, it isn't important. You can trust Cromwellianism to take care of you. Feel free to shift any responsibility. I suspect you have a serious problem, but you don't know what it is. Is that right?"

Mart nodded, surprised. "Something like that. I wasn't afraid of that assignment. It was only—"

"Plan Two was the one that bothered you, I gather," Llewelyn said. "I'm not familiar with the mechanics of Weather Control myself, but I'm told that plan would have affected the weather in the Aleutians, suddenly and violently. Right?"

"The Aleutians? Why—yes. That's right. The cold front—"

Mart went into detail, feeling a curious sense of relief as he talked, explaining just how Plan Two would adjust the pressure areas and bring a phenomenal warm spell, as a by-product, to the Aleutian group.

Llewelyn didn't seem to be watching him, but every time Mart hesitated, the Leader put in a casual word that kept the monologue going.

CHAPTER XII

The Maze of no Memory

REALIZING how long he had been talking, Havers paused after a while. The stiffness of embarrassment chilled him. Llewelyn got up and wandered to the immense window.

"Sir," Mart said suddenly, "may I ask you a question?"

"Why not? What is it?"

"Is there something wrong with me? My—mind, I mean?"

"Do you think there is?" Llewelyn said, without turning.

Havers tried to marshal the few facts he had.

"I don't know. But there's—something—I don't know. Why was I brought to Mnemonic Center and given all those tests after I'd refused that assignment?"

"Weather Patrolmen don't refuse assignments, as a rule. That might be one reason, eh?"

"There's more to it than that, I think," Havers said. "I don't even know why I refused to take this particular order. Any other job, but not that one. And I don't know why. I should know. Only—"

Llewelyn came back from the window. "Only what?"

"I think the trouble's with me. Things seem strange sometimes, no—not solid. As though they were shadows of the real things, whatever they might be. And—" Havers' laugh was strained— "I don't feel any too real myself."

"Down at the Center they'd call it dereistic thinking," the Leader said. "Feelings of unreality often occur. The environment doesn't appear natural nor as it appeared formerly." Llewelyn paused briefly, his glance flicking Havers' face, then sliding away again. "And in depersonalization there's a sense of change in yourself. Your body feels altered, unreal. But emotional stresses can cause those feelings."

"I'm not under emotional stress."

"How do you know? It may be submerged.

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That's why I'm saying, give your impulses free rein for the next few days. Your buried stresses may come out in the open, and then they won't be so hard to remedy. As for feelings of unreality, I have 'em sometimes myself. I'm older than you—old enough to have seen a world change overnight. I can say things aren't the way they used to be, and I'd be right. Things have changed."

"But they're not changing now," Havers said, and the other man nodded.

"Is that the trouble, then?" Llewelyn asked.

"I don't know. I hadn't seen it in just that light before. But I wonder. The whole world did change overnight, didn't it? But now it's stopped."

"Stopped?"

"There are a few government-controlled Moon rockets on the regular run. But why not the planets?"

"The Moon's a mining base. It's near enough to be controlled. The planets aren't. There might be trouble. We'll have to be sure of the Earth before we try for Mars or Venus."

"That's an explanation," Havers said, "but I'm wondering something. Who gives the orders?"

Llewelyn blinked.

"I've never questioned this before, either," Mart went on, "though it's pretty obvious. You're at the top, sir. Do you give the orders?"

"Some of them," the Leader said. "Mnemonic Center is under my jurisdiction."

"That isn't quite what I mean. Who gives you your orders, or does anybody?"

"Well, there's the Leader Council," Llewelyn said, and Havers suddenly got the impression that the man did not want to talk about this matter at all. "They follow the tenets of Cromwellianism, and they're the high administrative group. They inherited certain methods and principles of science and logic from the pre-Cromwell world."

His voice died away. He looked more tired than before, and something like doubt showed in his thin face.

A signal hummed. Llewelyn spoke into a nearby teleaudio, and looked up at Havers as he finished.

"Sorry. I'll see you again soon. Meanwhile remember what I said. About submerged conflicts. Do what you want to. You'll be my guest for a few days. I'll have someone show you to your suite."

He smiled at Havers and the two men stood up as a servant entered the room.

"He'll show you the way," Llewelyn said. "Then you're on your own."

Half-way to the door Mart paused as a women appeared on the threshold. She was not young, but she seemed to give an appearance of youth, perhaps because of the atmosphere of restful calm that surrounded her.

"Margot," Llewelyn said, hurrying toward her. He took her hand. "This is Weather Patrolman Havers," he introduced Mart. "Havers—my wife."

Thus Mart Havers saw his mother again, for the first time in many years.

He did not know her.

And she did not recognize him. . . .

UNTIL now, Havers thought, sitting on the edge of his new bed and staring blankly at the windowed wall before him—until now the one purpose which had seemed to guide his life had been busyness. Every moment, almost, until today, had been planned to fill his time to overflowing. And the effect—the planned effect, perhaps—had been that he'd had no time to think or to worry because he could not think.

But now he had too much time.

This was the second day as Llewelyn's guest. He had seen only the servants who brought his meals. He had not gone out or wished to. For long hours he had lain on his bed, arm across his eyes, striving in all the ways he could devise to push through that closed curtain which shut his own past away.

He had tried direct chains of memory, tracing back from this moment to his last clear recollection of the past. He had tried random attacks, forcing his mind to emptiness until something strong enough to outwit the barrier swam up to the surface, and linking backward from that. He had ransacked his memory for the flotsam of early life and groped in vain among childhood recollections. He had recollections of childhood, yes but they were not satisfying, somehow not quite real.

And in some ways what he did remember was irrational. He knew he had grown up in an orphan institution, training all along for this weather work. And yet, dimly, he seemed to recall a fat man in bright clothes and a dark aura of hatred whenever he remembered the man.

Some officer at the institution, perhaps?

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No. He knew that was wrong, but he did not know how or why. And surely no institution child would have been allowed the wild forays among dark byways which he could so dimly recall in fragmentary form out of his past.

Those were dreams, he told himself wearily. They must have been dreams, of the kind a romantic boy weaves for himself to compensate for a dull life. But why did the memory of them seem so much more real than those realities he knew he must have lived in the institute?

Llewelyn was testing him deliberately, of course, testing to see how strong the artificial barriers were in Havers' mind. Because so strong a—bloc against bringing necessary disaster upon the Aleutians had somehow managed to come through the wall, there was only one way to tell him how much more might come through. Better to invite trouble now, while it could be watched and measured.

The servants reported meticulously to Llewelyn all that Mart did. He made careful notes and waited.

On the third day Daniele televised Mart.

"May I come up?" she said directly, giving him a level gray stare from under her lashes.

She wore, as always, the severe uniform of her class, the clever makeup that hid her beauty. But Havers never saw her now without superimposing upon that plain background the one brief recollection of the real Daniele which shone so much more vividly in his mind than the reality he looked on.

"Of course." He rubbed his eyes. "Shall I meet you somewhere?"

"No. Anything wrong?"

"Oh no. I'm a little drowsy is all. I've been trying to remember."

"Remember what?"

"That's the trouble. I—I don't know."

Her voice and her manner had lost the gradually increasing intimacy which had grown up between them in the past months. Tonight she seemed as remote as when they first met.

"I'm on my way," she said crisply, and blanked out.

Something was wrong. He knew her well enough to recognize that, and he waited impatiently for her to ring at the door. It should have been exciting, this prospect of being alone with her for the first time since the moment when their relationship had taken its curious turn toward intimacy. But Havers felt uneasy when the ring came at last and he opened the door to her.

"Alone?" she asked, glancing around the room as she came in.

"Yes. What's wrong?"

She wheeled sharply, looked up at him, opened her lips to speak, and then instead shook her head and turned away. Havers had never known her to show such indecision before. On an impulse he took her shoulders in his hands, turning her to face him.

"Daniele," he said softly. "Daniele, what is it?"

And when she still would not speak, he released one shoulder to reach out and pull the spectacles from her nose. The blue eyes looked up at him, long-lashed, cloudy now with trouble. Gently he pushed the gray cap from her forehead until tendrils of pale gold hair showed, and the coronet of tight braids above them.

"That's more like it," he said. "That's the Daniele I really know. Do you still remember, Daniele?"

She would not pretend to misunderstand.

"Yes. I've been remembering all this time—longer than I should. All that was a mistake, Mart."

"BUT—"

He narrowed his eyes at her, trying to understand, thinking of these months past when their growing friendship had based itself on the unspoken acceptance of the kiss they had never shared—yet.

"It might have been a mistake, once," he said. "But not now. Not when we know each other so well. We've been working toward this meeting a long time, Daniele. I've been going along on the idea that there was a chance for you and me. A good chance. A chance that was getting better."

"No!" Her voice was sharp, but he would not let her finish.

"You've been talking to Kelvin, then. He's persuaded you—"

"No. He doesn't know anything about all this."

"What's wrong, then? Up to a few days ago I was sure things were going well between us, Daniele. From that first evening, I thought you felt as I did. I know you did. You aren't like most women. You wouldn't make a game of this. If you hadn't responded to me you wouldn't have gone on with our check-ups. You'd have handed me over to

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someone else. Is it because I cracked up a little over that patrol business? Did you think I was afraid, Daniele? No, you're not such a fool."

"It was that, Mart. Or partly that. Let me talk."

She pulled free and walked away from him toward the wall, where a mutacolor picture in a heavily carved frame coiled slow tint through slow tint in a drowsy pattern.

"Listen and let me tell you what I can," she said, and fingered the stud that controlled the picture, speeding up the action until light followed upon light in a rhythm almost martial.

"I *did* respond, as you put it, after that evening. There's something about you different from anything I've ever known before. It's exciting and—dangerous, perhaps. Andre is all I ever thought I could want, until you came along that night. But Mart, what's wrong with you? Do you know?" She gave him an anxious, searching look.

"I wish I did know. Do you?"

She did not answer him. After a moment, still playing with the stud, she went on.

"I'll tell you frankly, Mart, you're not the man for me. I thought you were. I know now you're not. Isn't that enough?"

He drew a quick breath to protest. And then something about the way she was watching him made him pause, and an idea leaped into his mind that was cunning and distasteful. She knew! Whatever was wrong with him, she had found it out. Llewelyn knew too. He realized that suddenly, looking back over their talk and piecing his idea together. There was some secret about himself that he could almost guess, he had come so close to recognizing it in his long, deep hours of solitude.

What was it? He thought he could find out. And he must know, even if it meant tricking this girl he believed he loved.

"Let's not pretend any longer," he said suddenly. "You didn't have to come up here to tell me all this. You came for a reason. To see me, look at me, find out how much I know. I've spent the last three days lying on my back thinking, Daniele. I've got my answer now. You're right—I'm not the man for you. I'm only part of a man. I'm hollow, unstable, incomplete. I know it. Is that what you want to say?"

Her finger on the picture stud gave a sudden twist that sent color like hot flames leaping inside the frame.

"You know that much, then. Yes, Mart. I never have lied to you. That's true. I grew up a Leader, not a woman. I haven't any illusions about romance. I could love you very much, too much for safety. And you—you aren't there to love. You realize that as well as I do. Andre means safety. You . . . No, I'm afraid. It can't be you, Mart, ever."

Watching her closely, he went a step further, testing every inch of the way, saying only things he had thought out in these silent hours.

"My memory's incomplete," he said. "I can't remember far back, but there's a spot in my past where full memory seems to take up again. The ground seems solid from there on, but behind it is nothing stable. I think I know what it means, Daniele. I know what's wrong. It could only be one thing. You know it too. How long have you known?"

He didn't know what he was angling for, what "one thing" he meant. But he could see that she knew. And in her next words he realized he had won.

"Only since this morning, Mart," she said.

"How did you learn?"

He swallowed hard to keep the triumph out of his voice. His heart had begun to pound and his stomach knotted up with excitement. It had worked! In a moment she might give herself away.

"Llewelyn told me. I went to him. I had to find out. The thing is, Mart—"

She gave a final twist to the stud and turned away from the picture that flared into burning crimsons and golds behind her, making a halo for the gray cap she wore still askew on the shining pale braids.

"The thing is, Mart, what were you? You may know now what's happened, but you don't have your memories back. You can't guess what sort of a man you used to be. Llewelyn wouldn't tell me that. He wouldn't!"

CHAPTER XIII

The Man Who Knew

GRIPPED by a monstrous suspicion which was dawning in his mind, for a moment Havers ceased to hear Daniele. A name for all the vague ideas which had swum so long in his unconscious was taking shape.

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For three days the name of his malady had been nearly at tongue-tip, waiting to be spoken. But until now he had not quite dared apply it to himself.

"But what could I have done?"

He didn't know if he said it aloud or not. He heard the words echoing around inside his skull like thunder, and he thought he had not spoken.

"I'm a Leader. What terrible thing could a Leader have done to deserve—to deserve—"

He spoke the name of the thing aloud at last. After all it was he, not Daniele, who gave it its name in open speech.

"The Purge," he said, quite softly. "The Purge."

"Yes," Daniele told him. He didn't hear her. He didn't see her. He had almost no recollection of leaving the room.

Havers used the televisor to locate Alexis Llewelyn. They told him that the Leader was busy. Mart apparently didn't hear them. His tight lips opened only far enough to snap demands. He didn't talk much. He didn't dare to loosen the rigid control he had managed to enforce upon himself.

Finally he got through to Llewelyn at Mnemonic Center.

"I want to see you," he told the Leader.

"Very well. In a few hours I'll be at your disposal."

"Now."

Llewelyn seemed to notice Havers' expression.

"What's wrong?"

"I want to talk to you. Not over a visor."

Llewelyn hesitated. He came to a quick decision.

"Listen. I can't leave the Center now. There's a rather important experiment going on and I have to be on hand. I'll be free by midnight."

"Now!"

"Well— come over. I'll send down word for you to be admitted."

Havers broke the connection instantly. He wheeled, tiny beads of sweat on his cheeks, and made for the elevator. His footsteps made loud, rhythmic sounds. He listened to them thudding on the carpets. He chafed, forcing himself to stand motionless as the elevator dropped, and then he listened again to the sounds his heels made on the pavement.

He crossed the roadway, staring straight ahead, and a red-cloaked Guardsman had to rein in his cantering horse to avoid crashing into this grim, silent figure in the uniform of Weather Patrol.

Other footsteps paced him. He noticed that unconsciously. But not for a few minutes did they move abreast of him.

"Havers," a low voice said. "Mart Havers."

Mart gave a quick, angry glance aside. He saw a small fat man with a sleek cap of black hair, a man dressed unobtrusively in gray, even to gray gloves. He looked away again. He kept on walking.

"Havers," the man said, without moving his lips. "Don't you know me?"

Mart took three more steps before realization came to him. He had never seen this man before in his life. But how little he knew of what had happened before this new, artificial life had been given to him! Had he known this man before his Purge?

The coincidence was too obvious. Was it some trick of Llewelyn's?

He had paused.

"Dangerous," the fat little man said urgently. "Go in there—that restaurant. I'll join you. Quick."

Mart nodded briefly.

Across the table they took he looked at the little man and tried to remember. He shook his head.

"No," he said. "I don't know you."

"You've been Purged."

"I've just learned that. I can't remember what happened before."

The other man held his right hand under the table, where only Havers could see, and stripped the glove from a gleaming contraption of plastic and steel.

"Remember this?"

"No."

The glove was replaced.

"I dyed my hair black since you saw me last time. And I shaved my mustache. You wouldn't remember—Pusher Dingle?"

"No."

Mart still suspected Llewelyn's intervention. He ignored his drink and watched Pusher intently. Dingle's plump face twisted in a grimace.

"You've got to get me out of Reno," he said. "La Boucherie—he needs you."

"Who is La Boucherie?"

"That blasted mnemonic treatment," Dingle said. "You don't remember a thing? How you and Georgina planted that Sherlock in Avish's apartment? Something went

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badly wrong. I got away by the skin of my teeth. I've been hiding out for months."

"Yes?" Havers said noncommittally.

THIS man, he thought, was a potential enemy, as every man might be now. He, Mart Havers, was blindfolded.

Dingle sighed.

"You don't trust me."

"Why should I?"

"Well, how efficient is the Purge? You can't remember anything of your past life? No, I guess not. I've run into other people who've been through the Purge—usually they knew it, though." Pusher examined Mart's uniform. "Weather Patrol. I thought they only took Leaders in that."

"Right."

Dingle whistled. "Anyway," he said, "you've got to help me."

"Why?"

"If you had your real memories back, you'd know why."

"I'm going to get them back," Havers said suddenly, his intent crystalizing. "Somehow. I've got to."

Dingle looked skeptical.

"I'll find a way," Mart repeated. "I'm going to see Llewelyn now. I'm going to ask him questions."

"Which he may not answer," Pusher said. "You can't see a big shot like that and push him around. You probably won't even get past the office boy."

"He's expecting me."

"Where?"

"Mnemonic Center."

Dingle put his gloved artificial hand on the table and studied it. A new light had come into his eyes.

"There could be a way," he said, "but you'd need my help. Don't you realize what you're up against? Suppose you ask Llewelyn to give you your memories back and he says no? Suppose he says yes? The treatment takes months. You can't hold a smash-gun on him while you're under pentothal." He paused, then added significantly, "But I can."

Mart stared.

"Right," Pusher said. "You help me, I'll help you. I need you, Havers—especially in that uniform. You can get me out of the spot I'm in. I'm under guard right now."

"What?"

Dingle's plump face creased in a sly smile.

"I was hiding out in the Aleutians. I got word there was a dig there the Cromwellians had already searched once. Some of us figured they wouldn't bother to search again. Only they did—a few hours ago. I was brought down here with the others by jet. And they let me escape, after making sure I'd seen you walking along the street."

"We're watched now?"

"Sure. I don't know all the angles, but I've been in the rackets for years, and I know some of 'em. They let me see you, and then they made sure I was given a chance to escape. Don't ask me why. If you've had the Purge, you're not supposed to remember me."

"I don't. That's funny. The Weather Patrol job I turned down was . . . Yes, it involved the Aleutians. And that's where you say you were?"

"It was a hideout of La Boucherie's. That doesn't mean anything either? Well, there've been two guards trailing me ever since I—escaped. They've probably got orders to see what happens between us. But don't ask me why!"

Havers scowled. "I'm certainly not going to trust you at this point," he said. "You may be one of Llewelyn's spies yourself."

"You wouldn't think so of you had your real memory back."

"I'll get it back."

"Not without my help you can't," Pusher said, and glanced at his artificial hand again. "I've got an idea. You've an appointment at the Center with Llewelyn?"

Mart nodded.

"Okay. My guess is that those guards are just supposed to watch us and report. And to stop us if we try to leave Reno. But suppose we went to Mnemonic Center and saw Llewelyn? Suppose we put the heat on him, and made him restore your memories?"

"You said it takes months."

"I've heard talk of a new machine that does it faster. Instantly. It won't work for Purging, but it does something—short-circuits the mind—if the guy's already been purged. Llewelyn's in charge of Mnemonics. He'd know how to work it. And it's the only chance you'll ever have of getting your memories back. Did you really think you could talk Llewelyn into it."

MART thought of Daniele. A slow, deep anger was burning within him. And there was a hollowness, too, a feeling that he was merely a shadow, that his real substance

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had been taken from him.

"You help me, I'll help you," Dingle said. "But you've got to promise to get me out of Reno."

"How can I?"

"Your uniform's a passport."

"What about those guards you say are watching us?"

Pusher looked at his gloved hand again. "Leave that to me," he said. . . .

The first warning Llewelyn had of trouble was when Havers and Dingle opened the door of his office and stepped inside, each man carrying a smash-gun. Llewelyn didn't move. His tired face tightened a bit, that was all.

"Don't move," Dingle said. He circled the desk, looking for concealed signal buttons. "All right. Stand up. Against the wall. Hold out your arms."

Deftly he frisked the Leader, while Llewelyn's eyes held steady on Mart Havers.

"Put down your hands," Dingle said. "But stay where you are. If anybody comes in, you'll be killed. Remember that."

"You've been followed," Llewelyn said.

"Not any more, though," Pusher said, smiling. "Remember what I said, If there's trouble, you'll be the first to get it."

The Leader was still looking at Havers.

"There'll be no interruptions," he said. "I gave orders that I wasn't to be disturbed. I wanted to see you alone, Mart."

"Did you know why I was coming?" Havers asked quickly.

"I guessed. You've found out you were Purged. Is that it?"

Mart nodded.

"The human factor always fails us," Llewelyn said. "With you—and with this other plan. I tried to stop that, but apparently didn't succeed."

"What plan?"

"Letting Pusher Dingle escape and get to you."

"We're wasting time," Pusher said, and Havers nodded.

"You know what I want, Llewelyn," Havers said. "Either I get it now, or I'll kill you."

"Your old memories?" the Leader asked. "It's a long treatment. It takes months."

"That new machine you've got," Dingle put in. "That doesn't take months, does it?"

Llewelyn didn't answer. Mart pushed his gun muzzle forward.

"There's such a machine?"

"There is. But it's still experimental. It's much too dangerous to use on a human subject yet."

Havers ignored that.

"Where is it?" Anger rose in him. "I'm not playing. I'm quite ready to kill you. Then we can look for another technician who can work the machine. You can't stop me now. Understand that?"

Llewelyn nodded toward a door. "It's in my private lab. Let's go inside. We'll be safer from interruptions."

CHAPTER XIV

The Mind's High Voltage

PUSHER'S eyes narrowed suspiciously. But the Leader, ignoring the guns aimed at him, turned his back and went slowly across the room. Dingle was at his heels. The door opened.

"Okay," Pusher said. "I hope."

They went in. The door shut behind them. The lab was big, but not cluttered. Wiring, mechanisms, calibrated dials and revolving drums—all were vaguely familiar to Mart.

Llewelyn went to a metallic, partly insulated chair and ran his hand across one of its arms.

"Is that it?" Mart asked.

The Leader nodded. "That's it, Mart. But you can't use it. It's too dangerous."

"You know how to work it, though," Pusher said. "If anything goes wrong—" He gestured wth his weapon.

Llewelyn turned to face them. "You're not psychologists or neurologists. The brain's a delicate mechanism. We've been trying to build an artificial synapse between the conscious and the unconscious mind. That's where your former memories are, Mart—buried in your unconscious. Considered electrically, there's a high potential built up there. But the insulation between conscious and unconscious is pretty good. That's a safety measure. If you make an artificial synapse, it's like running a dangerously high voltage through a copper wire that isn't made to take it. And there's only one safety fuse in the mind." He paused.

"I'll take the chance," Mart said.

"Let me tell you what the fuse is. It's insanity. It's the final retreat for a mind

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that's too overloaded with high voltage. So far we haven't found a governor to control this device. It bridges the two minds, yes, but it does it too fast to be safe. We don't know enough about the mind, Mart. Especially one like yours. No potential Leader has ever taken the Purge before."

"Who was I?" Havers asked slowly. "What could a Leader do that would make a Purge necessary?"

Instead of answering, Llewelyn went off apparently in a new direction.

"It was experimental," he said. "You were valuable material, and we wanted to save you, if we could. But all—almost all—of your previous memories had to be erased. We had to make sure of that. We had to make absolutely certain you'd turn into a *bona fide* Cromwellian. That's why we kept checking on you, through Daniele Vaughan and others. After a while we were convinced you were safe, that your unconscious had turned the lock on those dangerous early memories of yours."

"What were they? That's what I want to know."

Llewelyn didn't answer that either.

"You refused a certain order. Superficially that was unimportant, except it was a bad breach of discipline. But our psychologists checked. So did I. I had a reason for being interested in your case. I suspected that it was your unconscious mind that had prompted your refusal to take on that particular Weather Patrol job. I knew that if the job went through, there'd be an abnormally hot spell in the Aleutians. Some glaciers would break up. One in particular. A certain hideout would be exposed and discovered."

Dingle caught his breath.

"You didn't know it had been already discovered. You talked about it when you were given the Purge. Our Guards went up there, but it was empty. So we forgot about it temporarily, until you refused that order. After that, we sent up guards on another routine check, and found out that some lawbreakers had moved in in the meantime." He glanced at Pusher.

"I've known this man, Dingle, before?" Mart said. "Before I was Purged?"

Llewelyn nodded. "We've never worked on a Leader's mind before. We weren't quite sure how effective the Purge would be, whether the unconscious would keep its secrets. So we had to make sure. I had you brought here so I could study your psychological motivations. I didn't believe you knew consciously that the Weather job would be dangerous to your—your former friends, but it was your unconscious mind that interested me. I had to make sure you wouldn't begin regaining your old memories. That's why I gave orders to let Dingle escape after he'd seen you. I wanted to find out your reaction."

Havers eyed the chair. "Don't bother with long explanations," he said curtly. "They won't be necessary, after—" He gestured toward the mechanism.

THE Leader didn't answer. Mart handed his gun to Pusher and sat down in the chair.

"I'll give you ten seconds," he said. "After that, you'll be killed and we'll find another technician to do what we want."

"Very well," Llewelyn said. "My death wouldn't stop you. This may be the best answer, after all. A Leader's mind is so

[*Turn page*]

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complicated that the Purge may stultify it fatally. Perhaps it was a mistake to remove your early memories. From what I know of your mind, Mart, I suspect you have remarkable potentialities. But you need all your brain to develop them. I'll tell you this. Before your Purge, you were an enemy of Cromwellianism. And now you're a Cromwellian. Well, I'll bargain with you. I'll agree to restore your former memories, if you let me do it my way. The safe way. It will take three months."

Havers shook his head.

"I don't trust you," he said. "Even if I did, I know you're not at the top. You take orders too—from the Council."

"This is dangerous. You run the risk of insanity."

Suddenly Mart found that he didn't care any more. He found himself vaguely hoping that the treatment would kill him, and the hope was strangely familiar in his mind, as if it slopped into a groove already worn to receive it. In another crisis of his life, somewhere, sometime, lost with the lost life, he had felt as he felt now. "Let it kill me! Let it be finished!"

Pusher Dingle gestured with his gun at Llewelyn.

"Ten seconds," he said. "Get going."

Llewelyn looked at Mart. He looked at the switch on the wall above the chair. For an instant he hesitated. Then he shook his head.

"I won't do it," he said.

Mart Havers gave him a grim, narrow-eyed glance. Then deliberately he twisted in the chair and laid his hand on the switch.

"Is this it?"

Llewelyn's shoulders slumped. He said nothing, but he nodded. Mart's hand closed on the lever. He pulled it down.

Mart Havers felt the firmness of the chair beneath him, the firmness of the lever in his hand. He felt a quiver of something, some intangible force, move blindly through him. And then a bomb went off in the center of his brain.

Until that instant no man could have imagined what the mind of a god might see. In Mart Havers' mind every pathway worn by every random thought that had ever crossed it for one freakish second stood clear and open. He could look down every pathway to its source. And every path was double.

For his mind was double, too. And the halves were at war.

In that first godlike illumination he did not realize it. He was only stunned by the vast complexity of the memories that poured in upon him. But after the first second, the memories crashed and clashed.

For when Mnemonics altered Havers' brain, they had implanted ideas diametrically opposed to the ideas already there. They had to. For every erased belief they set up a counter-belief, a contradiction, stemming from false but plausible sources.

So on the one hand, in a series of flashing pictures, Havers seemed simultaneously to see—for one instance—a handsome Guardsman gallant in plumes and scarlet cloak, bravely going down under the treacherous onslaught of squat, sneering men in Freemen emblems, and his emotion choked him with grief and loyalty; and in the same bewildering instant he saw the Freemen as sturdy, courageous martyrs fighting against hopeless odds, and their Guardsman victim a plumed fop who personified all that was evil and decadent.

That conflict multiplied endlessly in the vast spaces upon which any human mind can open. Wave upon wave of passionate conviction surged up and crashed upon an equal, opposing wave, until the tumult overreached the bounds of reason and Mart Havers felt the foundation of his sanity reel beneath that intolerable burden.

He remembered. He remembered not only what surface memories the artificial treatment had erased, but the sources lying far beneath them, from which they had sprung in his childhood. He remembered all that the doctors had said and done above him while he lay at Mnemonics Center unconscious beneath their ministrations. He remembered clearly the false things planted upon the roots of the true things.

But he could not sort out true from false. He believed with perfect conviction in every double truth before him. He *knew* the Cromwellians were infallible, nobel, good—and he *knew* they were false, evil, decadent, His mind spun with ideas by which they might be saved and overthrown.

IF IT had been a physical conflict Mart Havers might have torn his own body in half to comply with the double convictions that pulled him two ways so ruthlessly, so strong was each side of the combat. But since it was mental, there was no out at all.

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No out except the thing Llewelyn had threatened, and Mart's was a strong mind, potentially so powerful that even under this terrible schism its tough fabric resisted to the very last.

The bomb went off in the center of his brain. He remembered that. He remembered, and then shut off his blinded thoughts, the instant when all memories lay frightfully open at one glance. He remembered a moment of such pure torment that the mind dazzled and refused to accept anything more. . . .

Long afterward, Pusher Dingle told him what had happened. But Havers had no recollection of leaving the Center, or of their flight. Pusher said he had seemed quite normal. But then Pusher did not know Mart Havers very well. Certainly he must have walked and run, fired his gun when he had to, hidden and lain flat and got up again to crawl in the shadows—all this as efficiently as a man with his wits about him.

But for all his thinking purposes, Mart Havers was mad for a long while. Mentally he was in a catatonic state of pure death, out of which nothing could shake him. It was his only hope for eventual cure, and he must have known it, in the murky depths of his mind walled off by scar-tissue while healing slowly, slowly took place.

Many days went by before Mart knew where he was, or who he was. And many more before the first painful stirrings of thought began again.

CHAPTER XV

Freemen's Hideout

LA BOUCHERIE drew the ragged fabric of his once-gala red cloak across his huge shoulders. The corners of his mouth were drawn down. He sat back in his chair, thrusting it against the crude aluminum brace that helped support the cave wall, and eyed Mart Havers.

"Got something?" he asked abruptly.

Mart found another chair.

"Maybe," he said. "My mind's still messed up. But I think there may be a way. I've been kicking it around with Georgina and Pusher, and it could work. But I wanted to talk to you first, and alone."

Havers had been here a month, in this top secret hideout near the Pole. It had taken that long for his half-wrecked brain to mend. With a new purposefulness he had forced himself to refrain from thinking ahead, waiting until he felt that he was ready. He was not quite ready yet, but the inaction had grown unendurable. He wanted a showdown.

One reason, perhaps, was the change in La Boucherie. It wasn't only the man's altered attitude toward him, though that was significant. There was a new, grudging respect in it, and a little more of animosity than Mart had ever realized. But he told himself that La Boucherie was under a tremendous strain. Alone, the man had saved the wreck of the Freemen, during the Cromwellian crackdown after Mart's capture, managing to bring nearly two hundred of them to this new, safer hideout.

La Boucherie had discovered the cavern long ago, Mart learned, but had kept the knowledge to himself. Back in 1948, it had been an experimental station for polar technological experiments, and, insulated beneath the tundra, it had stood safe even after its desertion. It had been completely forgotten, an unfinished construction. But La Boucherie had remembered, and secretly he managed to keep it stocked with food. It had been the haven he needed when the peril came at last.

"Well?" La Boucherie was waiting.

Havers ticked off points on his fingers. "One, the Freemen are smashed, except for this single cell and maybe some scattered members who can't help us. We can't hope to overthrow the Cromwellians. We haven't enough manpower. We can't count on the workers to join us, even though they're in the majority. They're used to Cromwellian rule. Right so far?"

La Boucherie nodded.

"Two, then. Everything depends on us—what we can do, alone. What are we aiming for?"

"You know that. Overthrow of the Cromwell rule."

"And then? Setting up another, arbitrary rule won't be easy. That's how tyrannies get started. Man should choose his own government. The government he deserves is what he always gets, anyhow. Remember, I've been a Cromwellian. I can see both sides of the coin. The trouble with Cromwellianism is that there's no strong opposition party."

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"You think that you would cure the evil?"

"I think so. But it's too late to create such a party while the Cromwellians hold power. The time for that passed long ago. They've been ruling for so long now that they're perfectly sure they're right and that everybody else is wrong. They never question their own rules."

"So?"

"There are two steps. Make the Cromwellians vulnerable. Then smash them."

La Boucherie sneered heavily.

"Easy to say," he remarked, "but they've got the weapons and the technology."

Havers shrugged. "Government depends on a comparatively few key men," he said. "There are perhaps a hundred Cromwell Leaders in the world today who aren't expendable. There's the Council—"

"Thirty-six men in that."

"You know who they are?"

"I brought my secret papers with me," La Boucherie said. "I know who the key men are. You're right on that point. If we could get rid of perhaps a hundred Leaders, there'd be chaos—until we were smashed and new Leaders stepped into the top posts."

"Suppose the Cromwellians had other fish to fry?"

La Boucherie shook his head.

"It's impossible. We haven't the ships or men or weapons. The Leaders are generally guarded. How far would the whole two hundred of us get in Reno, say?"

"It's still possible."

"We'd be gunned down in the streets!"

"By whom?"

"The Guardsmen, you fool! The Guardsmen!"

"Not if they were busy somewhere else," Mart said. "Not if the whole world happened to be busy somewhere else. Misdirection's the answer. The red herring. And a double play. You said we didn't have a weapon. There's a weapon right at our hands—the strongest one in the world. All we have to do is use it."

La Boucherie stilled.

"Atomics?" he said, and his voice was not quite steady.

"No," Havers said, "we wouldn't dare. And it wouldn't solve our problem anyway. If we tried to fly a load of atom bombs over the key spots, our planes would be shot down long before we got there. Key spots are guarded."

"We have three planes—"

"We'll hijack more. But atomics isn't the the answer. We'll want to strike at certain key spots that are constantly changing. The Cromwellians can't guard them efficiently, because they're so variable. And they won't be expecting that sort of attack anyhow."

"What sort? What weapon are you talking about?"

"Weather," Mart said. "Just—weather . . ."

THERE would be no chance for a second trial if they failed in the first attempt. Mart Havers knew that. And, in essence, the success or failure of the whole scheme depended on him, because he was the only man among them who knew Weather Control. He thanked his gods for the knowledge hypnotically implanted in his brain, and for the lab and field training he had had in the Weather Patrol.

For he knew weather. And he had to know it, backward and forward. What he planned was such a sudden, tremendous catastrophe that, once started, it could not be stopped. Not easily, at least, and while the Weather Patrol was trying to stop it, the Freemen planes would be starting more trouble.

The radio helped. A man was assigned to pick up and collate the weather reports, which ended on Mart's cluttered desk and were transformed into cryptic charts that he pored over endlessly. Highs. Cold Fronts. Warm fronts. The sunspot cycles. Barometer readings. Movements of pressure areas. They all built into a single pattern, while Havers planned and plotted and waited for exactly the right moment.

The moment would come, he knew, the time when a push in the right direction would cause the most trouble for the Cromwellians. One push wouldn't be enough, but a series of rhythmic taps can move a planet. And Mart was thoroughly familiar with Weather Control. What he would need, presently, was equipment.

That could be stolen.

La Boucherie was the unquestioned leader in that field. He found what Havers wanted and arranged his commandos accordingly. Everything was worked out on paper first—everything but the weather, which was unpredictable after a certain point. But given the initial equation, the rest of the pattern would fall into place.

One point seemed an insurmountable problem for a while—simple lack of man power. But it was Pusher Dingle who solved that.

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He remembered the Sherlock, the useful little radio-controlled robot mechanism and suggested its possibilities to Mart.

"Can you make 'em?" Havers asked.

"No. I stole that one. But I know where a lot more can be stolen."

"What about controlling them?"

"There are portable controls. I wouldn't have had to use that big lab, with so much equipment, if I could have got my hands on one of the control set-ups. But one man can't steal too much at one time."

He explained further. Havers called in La Boucherie.

It was La Boucherie who decided that question.

"The Wisconsin factory. That's the place. We'll raid it, at the right time, and each man will get a Sherlock and its controller. Then we'll spread out and keep moving. That way, nobody can get a direction on us and drop a bomb. We'll decentralize and stay mobile. We can control the weather planes from other planes, which we'll hijack first from various skyports."

So the work went on, under the frozen tundra at the Pole, while an air mass built up slowly above Newfoundland and the Azores High shifted westward. The oldest weapon in the world was being unsheathed, the hammer of Thor, the sword of Zeus, poised above the unsuspecting Earth.

Hammer of the thunder. Sword of the ligthning.

Out of the south cometh the whirlwind,

* * * * *

Zero hour.

The three planes had been transformed into mobile transmitting units. That had been necessary. No directional antenna must be focused on the polar hideout, the nerve center of the offensive. Three planes cruised in erratic courses far from the Pole, receiving Mart's commands and relaying them to the Freemen's receivers.

In Wisconsin. In Ontario. In California. In dozens of areas.

They had filtered down two days before. The three planes had ferried them, and returned ready for their task. Almost all of the two hundred had gone, leaving a skeleton crew at the hideout.

There was no need to keep unnecessary men here. If this cave were discovered, the fight was over. Everything depended on speed, indirection, one sudden, tremendous blow—and then a pattern amid general confusion.

Havers' section of the cavern had been walled off with screens in an attempt at privacy. Concentration was necessary. Makeshift tables and panels had been rigged, covered with charts and calculations. A sending set, non-visual, was beside him, with Georgina as its operator. A movable screen shut off La Boucherie, seated at an equally cluttered table, with another sending set near him.

Zero hour had passed.

La Boucherie lifted the screen.

"Should be getting reports," he said. That was true.

ONE immediate problem had been to procure enough weapons, but there La Boucherie had provided a ready-made answer. For years past he had been building up caches of arms in various places around the country, preparing for revolution against Cromwellianism, though he had never expected this sort of battle.

By now the two hundred should have provided themselves with weapons and scattered to their destinations—the airfields where they could hijack the necessary planes, the Weather Patrol airstrips where the specially equipped jetters could be obtained, the Wisconsin Sherlock factory.

Timing would do it. Timing, and a sudden, concerted blow.

The scrambler sent a stream of erratic noises through the cavern. Hastily La Boucherie switched on the unscrambler. It was one of the three relay ships reporting.

"Sherlocks procured. Plan Sub-Four proceeding. T-thirty-one M two-fourteen."

Havers met La Boucherie's eyes and nodded. He could spare no more than a second for that. Instantly he was back at his maps, recalculating, integrating the latest weather reports Georgina was noting. The Azores High had shifted somewhat. That meant a dozen other alternations in the pattern of weather that spun its tremendously complicated web across the globe. Certain key spots had moved in the last half hour.

"Got any changes?" La Boucherie said. "Almost ready now."

Mart figured rapidly.

"These changes," he said. "Newfoundland Key—from twenty-five feet to fifteen thousand. Kodiak Basin—"

La Boucherie relayed the new orders to

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the three receiving planes, and they in turn relayed it, via code, to the Freemen. The code was not uncrackable, but it would take a while for even the Cromwell experts to break it. That while might be long enough.

Eighty planes, more or less, each with its Freeman pilot and a Freeman handling the controller of the Sherlock—super remote control. For the Sherlocks were in Weather Patrol planes, the specially equipped jobs which had almost reached their various destinations.

"Two of our planes have been shot down," La Boucherie said.

"Almost ready," Mart told him. He examined his watch. "One more point to make sure of, that's all. Georgina, anything on the Mojave adiabatic?"

"Nothing new."

"Good enough. We'll take a chance. Ready, La Boucherie?"

"Planes Twenty-five, Sixty-one, Four and Nineteen aren't at their key spots yet."

"Which planes were shot down?"

"Twenty and Thirty-three. Wait a minute. Fifty-nine too, now."

"What's the nearest to Twenty's key area?"

"Seven. Next nearest, Thirty."

"Seven we need. Jerk Thirty to Twenty's key spot. Ready?"

"Forty-six is down."

Mart glanced at his charts. "We can't wait any longer," he said. "The pattern's as tight as we can hope to get it."

He drew a long breath. La Boucherie watched him, his blunt fingers poised over the signal key.

"Zero," Havers said.

CHAPTER XVI

Thunder and Lightning—Storm and Flood

SEVENTY-FOUR planes, scattered across the planet, sent out the radio impulses that activated seventy-four Sherlock robots, at the controls of seventy-four Weather Patrol ships. Simultaneously special equipment began to operate.

Down toward cloud masses plummeted pounds of dry ice.

Crashing trigger voltages of artificial lightning split the atmosphere at crucial points.

Monstrous parcels of air hesitated, shifted, and moved ponderously in new directions. Snow began to pour down from certain cloud areas. Depressions, tropical air masses, cold fronts—all were altered abruptly from their original pattern.

Altered into a new pattern of catastrophe.

Beaufort Number 12 winds had been limited to tropical revolving storms until this day. But now gales topping the 75 m. p. h. velocity began to march across the face of the Earth.

Out of the south cometh the whirlwind.

Weather takes time to develop, usually. That was why Havers had waited until all the elements were ready, poised in dangerous equilibrium, waiting only for the catalyst he had provided. Even so, the great air masses can move at only a certain speed. They are ponderous. But they are also nearly irresistible.

Cromwell civilization had its key spots, too. The communication and transportation centers, for example. Mart had waited until he could immobilize those, until the unstable, shifting weather giant had poised his iron-shod foot about the nerve centers of Cromwellianism.

Far beneath the frozen tundra they heard nothing. But they knew what was happening. At first the radio gave reports. Then that failed in screaming static. A handicap, perhaps, but more of a handicap for the Cromwellians, who did not have a prearranged plan.

La Boucherie's plan was already in operation. Each Freeman knew what his task was to be. Some were to remain in control of the Weather planes. These men Mart had given the rudiments of Weather training, so he hoped they would know what to do. The weather crisis must not be allowed to pass. It must be kept at full intensity, even though the Cromwell Weather Patrol would be doing its best to bring the storms under control.

Thirty-six hours later Havers turned to La Boucherie and said;

"We've shot our bolt. Short of wiping out civilization, we've done all we dare now. I think we've got them on the run. It'll take time to be sure, but . . . I wish the radio were working."

La Boucherie turned from the map wall, under whose high, concave side he had spent

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most of the lapsed hours, keeping the records in colored chalks as reports poured in.

"You look half dead," he said. "Better lie down a while. I'll wake you if you're needed."

For the first time Havers realized how near collapse he really was. The cavern wavered before him as his taut nerves began at last to relax. He looked up at La Boucherie, standing under the hollow patterned world as it arched above him. There were scarlet rings around ten principal cities—Reno and Chicago among them—where the nerve centers of the Cromwellian culture had their being.

Every city must by now be helpless, communications cut off, air impassable to flight traffic. Intricate symbols sweeping across the map traced the course of pressure areas moving ponderously under the goads of the Freemen planes.

"I think we've done it," Havers said.

"Think?" La Boucherie demanded. "Don't you know?"

"This is ticklish business. Too much pushing could bring on wholesale disaster. I've explained all that before. As much as I dare do I've already done. Now we can only wait."

La Boucherie was silent. Then he went with his incongruously light step to the chart table and leafed over the big scribbled sheets. He had learned more than a little from Mart in the past weeks, and he could read the charts with a fair degree of accuracy now. Clearly he knew what he wanted. In a moment he turned up an X'd-out chart and spread it across the table with a crackling sweep. He knocked his fat knuckles against it.

"This one, Mart. Remember?"

Havers glanced up as he pulled off his boot. The cot creaked under him.

"Forget it," he said in a weary voice. "That's the one we worked out *not* to use. It's okay now. We won't need it."

He had charted out the more perilous possibilities that could result from this herding of the storms, simply to have a map that would warn him away from danger. Whenever a curve plotted from the incoming reports swung its arc too near that danger pattern Mart could check with this master plan and reroute the ships.

"We're fighting the Cromwellians, not the whole world," he said. "Some lives have got to be lost, but no more than we can help. Tear that out now, will you? And wake me if anything comes up."

LA BOUCHERIE came forward with his soft tread and pulled a screen around the cot where they had taken turns in catnapping.

"Go to sleep," he said. "I'll call you."

Mart was dimly aware of lights being turned low beyond the screen, so that only the soft blue flame of the trioxane heat-tabs glowed upon the walls. He could hear the inarticulate radio stuttering out static, and La Boucherie's heavy breathing as he rustled papers at the desk.

Then sleep was like a thick, soft blanket shutting out everything. Above, thunder and lightning, snow and storm and flood raged across the world. But here Mart Havers slept sound.

He dreamed that Daniele's wild-rose face bent above him, her fair hair brushing his cheek. He dreamed that she was calling him, and he woke with a jolt, the voice out of his dream still echoing softly around the cavern.

Nothing had changed. The blue flame glowed on. He might have slept minutes or hours. There was still the occasional rustle of papers, the steady crackle of static, the almost inaudible buzz of voices in La Boucherie's earphones and his soft rumble of instructions in reply. It was curiously peaceful down here under the frozen tundra at the top of the world.

Then in the stutter of the radio a voice for a moment spoke with freakish clearness. It said only a few words, but the words brought Mart up on his cot with galvanizing force.

"—tidal wave that wiped out Galveston now leveling off inland around—"

The squeal of static broke in and silenced the rest of the sentence, while Mart stared at the blue-lit screen and wondered if he were still dreaming. He waited, frozen with incredulity, and in a while the static broke again and another voice said in quick, quiet phrases:

"—hurricane-flattened eastern coast reports thousands of deaths in—"

The screen went over with a crash as Mart sprang to his feet. La Boucherie, crouching over the desk, whirled and stared at him in surprise. And then a terrifying look of triumph and cunning moved his thin lips and narrowed his eyes. It was not quite a sane look, and Mart felt his heart jump and pause for a second before it began to thump faster

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with dismay and dawning rage.

"How long have I slept?" he demanded.

But he did not wait for an answer, for his eyes met the recorder dial on the desk and he saw, with a sinking distress, the answer. Twenty-six hours. Time enough for the storms he had launched to begin leveling off, time enough for the Freemen to begin their negotiations with the Cromwellians isolated in their beleaguered cities—if all had gone according to plan.

But it had not. He knew he had not dreamed those radio reports. La Boucherie's face would have told him that if all else failed to tell him.

And it was Havers himself who had furnished the plans for disaster. He should have known. He should have set some guard while he slept. He should have—

No matter now. Too late for all that. In his stocking feet he thudded across the cavern and looked up at the map-lined hollow above. A glance was enough. Where only ten ringed cities had spoken of siege before he slept, every capital in the nation was shadowed now with the marks that told of ruin already accomplished or already on the way. Irrevocably on the way.

Not even the Storm Smashers could smash these expertly launched disasters in the time that remained to them. For the climatic gyroscope of the whole hemisphere had been thrown off balance at La Boucherie's orders by now.

Mart read the tale of tidal wave, hurricane, overwhelming floods whenever he looked. A second Deluge, a new Ice Age in the making—and lives must already be lost beyond any counting by those left alive in the ruined areas.

As he stared, stunned, La Boucherie's soft laughter penetrated at last through his daze. He turned. La Boucherie's face was crimson, his great bulk heaved with the deep waves of his merriment. And it was not the merriment of a sane man.

"I've done it!" La Boucherie said between the gusts of his mirth. "I've done it at last! They smashed me twice and they thought I was finished, but this time I've smashed them! The last laugh's La Boucherie's, after all."

"But why—why" Havers could not shape his words, but the fat man seemed to understand. He slapped both big hands on the desk.

"It wasn't sure, your way," he said. "I've had enough waiting! I've waited thirty years! I've tried the slow way and now I'm through with all that. Now they know who's master! If anyone's left alive when I've finished with 'em, they can bow down to La Boucherie and thank me for saving their lives! I'll show 'em who runs this planet before I'm through!" He choked on his own laughter and his face turned a deeper crimson as he swayed in the creaking chair.

BEHIND him the radio sputtered again and then said:

"Reno Leaders calling martial law until Council sends down emergency orders. Weather Patrol over Reno reports storm under control there. Council promises relief within hours."

La Boucherie's thick-voiced laughter halted abruptly. He swung to the radio just as static blanked out the voice again.

"Mart!" he said sharply. "The Council—what is it?"

"You know as much as I do," Havers heard himself saying.

"You were there, in Reno. You talked with the Leaders. You must know who really heads the Government. What is this Council?"

"I only know they never make mistakes," Mart said. A faint flicker of enjoyment was beginning to sound in his voice. Wryly he added, "You and I are only fallible humans. We've wrecked the country. Now the Council's taking over. I wouldn't give a nickel for your life or mine from now on, La Boucherie."

Suddenly, for the first time in many years, he remembered what the name La Boucherie really meant. The butchery—the slaughter-house. This man had made the whole continent a slaughter-house under the blows of the elements, but a reckoning was on its way. He found he was laughing.

Ponderously La Boucherie heaved himself out of the chair.

"Mart!" he said.

Mart Havers did not hear. His laughter was half-hysterical and he knew it, but he could not stop. Not until a searing pain hissed past his face and something crashed against the wall behind him. Then he caught his breath and stared. Half-swallowed in La Boucherie's huge hand, the little gun looked innocent enough. But it glared with white fire as Mart saw it and a second pain seared his other cheek.

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"All right!" La Boucherie went on. "We're going out. You first, Mart."

"But where? Why?"

"We're going to Reno. You know your way around there. You're taking me to the Council!"

It was a Weather Patrol rocket-job which Havers flew, with La Boucherie beside him, the little gun digging into his ribs all the way. One of the stolen ships. One of the ships in which his friends among the Freemen and his friends among the Patrol were at this moment battling one another with thunderbolts and cloud masses above the stricken Earth.

A rocket flies fast. High and fast. They could not see much of the curved Earth from this stratosphere level, but through a rift in the clouds now and then, too far below to have meaning or relevance, the planet's ruined face looked up at them.

Sunlight glinted on vast moving sheets of water where cities had been only yesterday. White snow fields blotted out the green of whole states. Mountain ranges reeled past below, sheathed in dazzling ice.

And La Boucherie chuckled, chuckled as the ship jetted on.

CHAPTER XVII

Madman's Last Effort

UP HERE they were comparatively safe from the elements they themselves had loosed upon the shaken world. But presently the jagged peaks below them took on familiar shapes, and Mart knew that Reno lay below the cloud blanket.

Rain lashed with the fierce velocity of hail against the ship's sides as they broke through the ceiling and the white tower which housed the Council pointed its tall, pale finger at them. Thunder rolled as they slanted down, and a violet lance of lightning shook threateningly across the gray sky.

Mart never saw the ship that shot them down.

He knew, of course, that guard ships constantly patrolled the area, but the waning storm was still fierce enough to blind him and his first intimation of attack was almost his last—the smashing impact that knocked him out of his seat and cracked his head against the curved wall.

Rain in his face roused him. Someone was shaking his shoulder and crying, "Mart! Mart!" over and over in a faraway voice.

"Daniele?" he said, then opened his eyes and was looking into La Boucherie's face, streaming with rain.

He sat up, testing his limbs. Miraculously, he seemed to be unhurt.

"Mart, wake up!" La Boucherie's voice was urgent. Fat hands helped him to his feet. "The plane's smashed, but the rocket braked us. I'm all right. Are you? Hurry, Mart! They're looking for us. We've got to get away."

The white tower lifted high above them, rising only a little way off among debris that had been houses when Mart had last seen Reno. Hurricane and fire had come and gone here, and flood had put out the fire and was now beginning to recede a little.

Urged by La Boucherie, still half dazed from the fall, Mart scrambled over the ruins toward the tower.

Through the sluicing rain they floundered toward the back of the tower. Mart still had his key to one of the private entrances underground. He led La Boucherie down the stairs and into the little foyer, knee-deep now with rainwater, and fitted his key in the lock.

He was not quite sure yet what his own plans were. La Boucherie—something certainly had given away in the big man's mind, tried to the breaking point by thirty years of heartbreaking defeats.

And yet victory might be salvaged out of the terrible disasters still raging across the continent. No less than La Boucherie, Mart now wanted to confront the Council and demand an answer from whatever mysterious group he found at the height of the tower.

They could go only so high, Mart knew, without entering the public corridors. Private elevators went up five stories to the private quarters of the Leaders. Beyond that, it was anybody's guess how far they would get.

They got to the eighth floor. To work their way even so far was like fighting through a roar of heavy surf, for the whole great building was a vortex through which poured a pandemonium of activity. The halls seethed with hurrying men and women, their faces tight with sleeplessness and responsibility. The catastrophe which Mart had so lately unleashed upon the world was even now only

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beginning to slacken, and upon these men and women rested a heavy measure of the duty of combating its results.

The bright blue uniforms of the Weather Patrol made a pattern in the shifting crowds. The red cloaks of Guardsmen billowed out in the faces of passersby. Laboratory technicians in white smocks pushed through the jostling confusion with sheafs of reports in their hands. And now and then a tall Leader of Council grade hurried down a lane respectfully opened before him.

Many of the crowd wore torn and dripping uniforms, many had blood on their faces and clothing. La Boucherie's disheveled look and wild, furious eyes were not the arresting sight they would have been in any circumstances. It looked as if all Reno was pouring in and out of this enormous building, and among the rest two illegal entrants seemed unlikely to draw anyone's notice.

La Boucherie held Mart's arm in the grip of a big hand like a padded glove, through which the iron tension of muscles and bone clamped painfully. It was always surprising to be reminded of what power lay in those puffy, ineffectual-looking fingers. Mart's cloak, hanging in heavy folds between them, hid the little smash-gun engulfed in La Boucherie's fat palm and pressing between them into Mart's ribs.

"Where are you taking me?" La Boucherie demanded in the almost inaudible corner-of-the-mouth whisper that has been standard among fugitive minorities since men first began imprisoning one another. "Where is this Council?"

"Up somewhere at the top of the building," Mart told him in the same Slag-generated murmur. "I've never been there, but I know it's near the top."

"Don't try anything. You won't live long enough to regret it."

MART shrugged. He was not sure enough of his own mind to have any clear idea what he really did want. Through his own error, the attack on Cromwellianism had gone so far that there was no hope of redeeming the mistake.

Perhaps La Boucherie was right. Perhaps the only hope now was to smash all Leader authority from its very source and let fresh leadership arise out of the welter to which the continent had been reduced. He shook his head hopelessly. There had been too much strain on his battered mind in the past months. He couldn't think except in circles and parables.

"Let the storm blow itself out," he thought. "I sowed the wind. I'll have to reap the whirlwind. Let it blow. It's out of my hands now."

They reached the eighth floor without difficulty. But this was the top, so far as the public crowds were concerned. And as they waited by the broad elevator doors while a swarm of cloaked and white-coated men poured out, the thing both had been expecting happened at last.

A red cloak swirled beside them and a Guardsman in a shining steel helmet, still miraculously bright in spite of the mud and rain on his shoulders, put out his gloved hand to bar their way.

"Excuse me, sir," he said to Mart. "Your pass, please."

La Boucherie's gun dug hard in Mart's ribs. For a moment it seemed to Mart that the three of them stood in a little cone of absolute silence. All sound stopped around him while he waited for some idea to spring to lift in his mind. When it came he was not really aware of it.

"I haven't got a pass," he heard himself say, without any idea of what would come next. But it came smoothly enough. "I've lost my papers," he went on in a calm voice.

It seemed plausible enough. Many men must have lost their papers in the increasing chaos that had engulfed Reno.

"But you must have got a pass at the door," the Guard insisted, still politely, but with dawning suspicion in his eyes. "Whom do you want to see?"

"We came in a private way," Mart said truthfully. He held out the distinctive key which only resident Leaders carried. "We're on private business. Let us by, please. The elevator's just going."

He tried to push past the Guard. The man hesitated. That key had been a powerful bit of evidence, but he was still uncertain.

Mart saw the half-conviction on his face, and clinched it. He leaned forward and murmured in the Guard's ear, a code sentence by which as Weather Patrolman and Leader he had got entry into proscribed areas before.

There was a tense instant when La Boucherie's gun ground its warning snout into his ribs on one side in mistrust of this secrecy, and the Guard's mistrust on the other hand still held him rigid. Trapped

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between them, Mart waited.

Then the Guard relaxed, nodding his brightly helmed head.

"All right, sir. Go ahead." He stepped back.

Together Mart and La Boucherie crowded into the elevator, linked by the stiff bond of hand-grip and gun. The door slid shut, the Guard's watching face vanished, the shaft sighed beneath them as the car rose.

When the door slid open again six Guardsmen were waiting for them.

There was a flurry of excitement as the packed elevator emptied itself into the hall and the red-cloaked men shouldered forward to close in upon Mart and La Boucherie.

"You did it!" La Boucherie snarled at Mart's shoulder, and the gun muzzle wavered against his side a little as a fat finger tightened upon its trigger.

Something in Mart's face must have warned the Guards, for in the instant that Mart pivoted on his right foot and smacked his hand down over La Boucherie's gun wrist, swinging away from the muzzle as it scraped across his ribs, the foremost Guardsman lunged forward and flung his arms around La Boucherie's enormous shoulders, pinioning his arms from the back.

There was a period of heaving, stamping struggle. Someone had a stranglehold around Mart's neck, and the air swam red before him with his own suffocation and the streaming cloaks of the Guards. There was a great deal of shouting and confusion as the crowd swirled around the fight in its center.

But no soughing of a smash-gun sounded, and Mart knew after a moment or two of waiting for it that La Boucherie did not have a chance. Not without his gun. As for Mart himself—he was not fighting hard. He had been waiting equally for success or capture, uncertain which he hoped for, ready to accept either. Now he had his answer.

Few people paid any attention to the little group of Guards and the two prisoners as they marched down the length of the enormous room toward the desk at the far end. It must be an Operations Center for this whole area, Mart thought, glancing up at the three tiers of balconies rising above the thronging floor. Everywhere were desks, report boards, televisor screens, hurrying men.

IT OCCURRED to Mart suddenly that this room was probably the first relay station that received orders handed down by the High Council and distributed them abroad over the whole continent. He was conscious of an overwhelming desire to see the Council itself, or the man who represented the Council. Whatever or whoever it was on the topmost floor of this building, guiding the destinies of the Cromwellian world in this most perilous hour.

A man whom Mart had never seen before sat at the desk to which they were led at last. Curiously, it was La Boucherie who identified him. The fight in the hall seemed temporarily to have calmed La Boucherie a little, and now he murmured out of the corner of his mouth as companionably as if he had not been trying to kill Mart a few minutes before.

"Williams," he said softly. "Chief of the Continental Police. Belongs at Washington. They must have moved the whole organization right here. That means the High Council's here too, Mart. We've got to escape!"

The Guard who had first stopped them was talking to Williams now.

"And when he gave me the Leader code phrase," the man said, "I remembered the alarm we had about a renegade Leader, and —"

"Yes, yes, thank you." Williams cut him off impatiently. He looked down at Mart, his brows meeting in a scowl that might be anger or only deep thought. "You're Havers, aren't you? Renegade Weather Patrolman. What are you doing here?"

Mart shrugged and was silent. What could he say?

"I think you may have a lot to tell us about what's been happening," the police chief went on after a pause. "If you don't feel like talking now, I believe I'll—"

He broke off and flipped the switch of his visor-screen.

"Leader Vaughan," he said. "Leader Vaughan!"

The screen darkened and then Daniele's blue eyes and pale, tired face looked out at them.

"I have a man here who worked with you for a while," Williams said. "There's been a report out on him. Will you step down here for a moment?"

Daniele's gaze shifted from Williams to the group before the desk. Only Mart would have known that she was startled. That little flutter of her lower lip caught for a moment between her teeth was all the sign she gave,

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but her eyes dwelt upon his for what seemed like a long second before she said;

"Of course, Leader Williams. Right away."

She did not speak to Mart when she stood at Williams' elbow, looking down, but he thought she had not taken her eyes from him since she first came into sight, threading her way among the desks. She listened in silence to all Williams had to tell her.

"I'd like to suggest something," she said, when he finished. "Mart Havers was under treatment at Mnemonics when he had his —relapse. I'd very much like to have Leader Llewelyn see him. And this other man, too, since they were taken together."

She stared hard at Mart as she spoke. He felt sure she was trying to say something with that silent stare, but what, he could not guess. Perhaps even she did not yet quite know. Bewilderment was in her eyes, and something like surprise.

"If I may," she finished, glancing for the first time at Williams, "I'll go along too. I—I think I have something to say to Leader Llewelyn about this man."

They could hear the storm roaring outside when they came out of the elevator and crossed Llewelyn's private foyer. Rain pounded at the tall windows and slid down the glass in sheets so heavy the windows were opaque.

La Boucherie was up to something. Mart knew it by the changed tempo in the big man's breathing, in the way he walked between his guards. That violence in him which had built up for thirty years and broken at last with almost the force of the storm itself was not to be held in leash for long. But he timed himself with great cunning and control.

Daniele was speaking into the door-visor, announcing their arrival, when La Boucherie's enormous bulk lurched suddenly sideward as if he were falling. It looked so much like a fall that the Guard at his elbow put out his both hands to help. That was an error. La Boucherie's tremendous weight came down like an avalanche of solid flesh upon the Guard. La Boucherie's deceptive-looking hand flashed out, slipped the man's smash-gun deftly from its holster and folded lovingly around it.

La Boucherie struck the floor on one padded shoulder, rolled completely over and was on his feet with incredible lightness. For an instant the muzzle of the gun menaced them from the curtained doorway, La Boucherie's skull-like smile as menacing as the gun above it. The Guard, scrambling to his feet, for a moment gave him the shield he needed, and by the time the way was clear La Boucherie had vanished soundlessly.

It was hopeless, of course. He could not possibly get far in a strange building swarming with Guards and communication devices. Mart saw the leader of the Guards speaking into his glove-visor and knew the alarm was out already. Then the two men who gripped his elbows pushed him forward and he went into Llewelyn's private apartment again, Daniele walking before him.

CHAPTER XVIII

Top Secret

NO SINGLE detail of the story Mart told to Llewelyn was left out.

"And that," he finished, "is all that happened. All of it. It was my own fault and I'm ready to take the consequences, because I've got to. The thing was out of hand thirty years ago, I suppose, when La Boucherie had his first major setback and started on the path that led to—this. Certainly it was out of hand the moment I let myself fall asleep in the cave. I'm not excusing myself, Leader. I'm glad I did what I did. It's the sin of omission that worries me, and even that's too late to worry about now."

Llewelyn looked at him, the weariness in his lined dark face more nearly exhaustion than Mart had ever seen it. But there was no anger there. They were alone—Mart, Llewelyn, Daniele. Mart was locked into a restraining chair, comfortable but inflexible. The Guards waited outside. This was a conversation in complete privacy. Llewelyn proved that in the next instant by saying something that astounded Mart.

"You may be right," he said. "I think a lot of us have a feeling very like relief now that something's finally blasted the Cromwellian culture out of its stasis."

"You mean—" Mart stared at him. "You mean you're on our side?"

"Of course not. What do you offer, except anarchy? I mean I'm going to do everything I can from now on to reestablish the old regime, but with differernces. More flex-

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ibility. More scope. And you're going to help me, Mart."

Mart shook his head. Daniele's eyes were still unswerving on him, and he thought the look in them brightened a little now.

"I can't help you," he told Llewelyn. "Even if I wanted to, I'd never be accepted again. And I don't want to . You're wrong. The old abuses would be right back inside six months. Cromwellianism can't be flexible. It's got to stay rigid or break up entirely. That's the way it's organized."

"You left us while you were still under treatment," Llewelyn reminded him, ignoring his other arguments. "No one's going to blame you for doing wild things when your mind was in the state it was. I want you to undergo treatment again, Mart. Since you forced that reversal treatment on yourself and got your memories back I've been studying the method carefully. It had never been used before on a mind like yours. The records were taken automatically in the machine, of course. Having that data took me forward an important step toward solving your problem. I've been working on it here in my spare time."

He pushed open a sliding door at his elbow and they all looked into the shining laboratory beyond. A familiar chair stood there, like and yet unlike the one in which Mart had set off the bomb of conflicting memories inside his own skull. Llewelyn came forward leisurely and laid his hand on the arm of Mart's restraining chair. It rolled to his touch.

"Come with me into the lab," he said. "You too, Daniele."

It was a high, bright room glowing with flourescents. Here, too, the storm raged against tall windows so heavily that nothing but streaming water could be seen, though now and then lightning shot violent flashes through the waterfall, and thunder rocked the whole great building.

"Mart, I want you to let me finish the work on your mind," Llewelyn said persuasively. "You aren't in any condition now to refuse me. You aren't really responsible. Once I've brought you back to normal you'll see how right I've—"

It was a little thing that interrupted him. For an instant all three of them were aware of it without quite realizing what had happened. But the sound of thunder was much louder in the room, and a chilled blast of rain-wet air blew by them. Then knowledge seemed to strike all three at once, and they turned their heads almost automatically toward the windows.

La Boucherie stood there, grinning his mirthless skull-grin, rain streaming heavily down his gross body and the smash-gun steady in his hand. They could see the balcony behind him, and the storm which he himself had brought into being. Still grinning, he stepped carefully to the floor, closing the window.

"No, Mart," he said. "Don't be a fool. He can't force you to accept treatment if your mind rebels. You know what he wants to do, don't you? Put you under hypnosis again, so you'll be an automaton Leader. Don't trust him."

"That's not true," Llewelyn said dispassionately. It was curious how academically the two men seemed to be debating, arguing a point of free will as lucidly as if one did not hold the other at gun-point, and with all the instability of madness hovering on the face behind the gun. "It isn't true at all. I won't try to influence your decisions again, Havers. But you know your mind isn't working well yet. In your own mind you know you need treatment."

"Mart, don't!" La Boucherie's voice sharpened. "I need you! Wait!" He gestured with his gun and stepped forward toward the big metal chair upon which Llewelyn was leaning. "If you're telling the truth, Llewelyn," he said, "suppose you just sit down in that chair yourself. I don't suppose the treatment would affect you at all, if you think your own mind's all right now. You heard me, Llewelyn! Sit down, if you're not lying."

LLEWELYN looked at him for a long moment, eyes locked with the small, furious eyes of La Boucherie. His hand stole behind him, toward a stud in the wall.

"I think you need treatment worse than either of us," he said, his finger reaching the bell at last.

He touched it, but for an instant did not ring. La Boucherie could not see what he was doing. Mart could, and to save his life he could not have spoken. For much more was happening here than the mere conflict of the two men. The bell was no answer. He had to see the outcome. And one more thing was in process that he knew he must not halt.

Daniele was watching the bell, too. And she was leaning forward slowly.

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"Sit down, Llewelyn," La Boucherie said.

He put out a fat hand and pushed the Leader backward toward the chair. In the other hand the gun trembled a little with violent emotion violently controlled. Mart knew what storms of bitter feeling must be moving in La Boucherie's brain now, memories of his own frustrated career of Leadership, hatred of this man who had all La Boucherie had been denied.

"Sit down!" he said, and pushed hard.

Llewelyn's finger twitched and stiffened upon the bell. And Daniele moved with startling swiftness, her hand shooting out, striking the pressing finger aside. She spread her palm above the bell and shook her head slowly at Llewelyn's amazed stare, her lips colorless and pressed firmly together.

"I'm sorry, Leader," she said. "I've made up my mind. I think they're right. Cromwellianism's had it's day. From now on I'm with Mart Havers."

La Boucherie gave a howl of triumph and his blow knocked Llewelyn back so hard into the chair that for a moment the Leader was breathless. Daniele came swiftly to Mart, her eyes warm as they met his gaze. She touched three locks and the restraining arms of the chair sprang apart. He got up stiffly.

La Boucherie, working one-handed, with an uncanny deftness, already had the metal hood on Llewelyn's head. The strap locked beneath his chin with a final click. La Boucherie laughed senselessly and snapped the master switch above the chair. Mart would have stopped him. But it happened too fast. And now the sight of what was happening held him fascinated.

Llewelyn's eyes were blank. He stared straight before him, seeing nothing. La Boucherie laughed again and reached for the dial above the metal hood. He moved its pointer two notches up—and Llewelyn spoke.

His words were gibberish.

"La Boucherie!" Mart came forward fast, his arm out. "Stop it! You don't know what you're doing."

"I do know." La Bucherie swung his gun around and leveled it at Mart. "I know exactly what I'm doing. I've worked machinery like this before. It may kill the man, but before it does I'll find out what I want to know. Stand back!"

He turned the dial up two notches more. Llewelyn's gibberish went high and shrill, but a word was recognizable in it now and then. La Boucherie swung the pointer back eight notches. Blank-faced, unseeing, Llewelyn responded to it with unintelligible sounds. It was like listening to the tuning of a radio, swinging to and fro among the crackling static until finally the words came out in clear form on the narrow band of true focus. As Llewelyn's came, at last.

"I can hear you now," he said in a voice quite unlike his own. "You have the right calibration. Stop."

"Llewelyn!" La Boucherie's voice was thick with triumph. "Have I got the level of your mind I want? The sub-censor area? Tell me the code word that identifies you with the Council. Quick—what is it?"

Without hesitation Llewelyn told him. It was the top secret code entrusted to every Leader, different for each, to be guarded more closely than the Leader's life itself. Llewelyn babbled it out like a child. La Boucherie laughed with delight that was almost childlike, too.

"Tell me—where is the Council chamber?" he demanded, his voice shaking with eagerness. "How can I get to it without danger?"

"Take the elevator behind that door in the corner," Llewelyn told him promptly. "The Chamber is on the top floor. No one will stop you."

"What is the Council?"

"I don't know." Llewelyn's voice did not falter on this either.

La Boucherie bent forward, his face flushing dark.

"You've got to tell me. I'm talking to your mind below the censor area. You must answer with the truth. What is the Council?"

"There are many members. I have sat on the Council myself. But I can't tell you what it is. You must see that for yourself. No one could tell who had not seen it."

La Boucherie straightened. Sweat mingled with the rain on his broad forehead. He turned to Mart and Daniele, his gun steady. He backed toward the door Llewelyn had indicated.

"I'm going up," he said. "Mart, you're coming with me. I don't trust you down here. You—woman—whatever your name is, sit down in that chair. Yes, I know you say you're with us. I won't hurt you. But I've got a job to do. Sit down—that's right. Now kick that lever. There!"

The automatic locks snapped and Daniele lay back quietly enough in the confining bands.

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"I'll be all right," she told Mart. "I think you will too. Go on. See whatever it is you have to see. I believe you'll come back safe to let me go."

The last Mart saw of her was her warm, calm smile. . . .

THE small lift sighed to a stop, the door slid back. La Boucherie pushed Mart out ahead of him. They stood in an empty hall. Far down it were tall double doors with a symbol glowing upon them that meant "TOP SECRET—NO ADMITTANCE." And that was all they saw.

This area which should have been a hive of busy activity was utterly silent except for the faintest possible humming noise, almost subsonic, a sound that made Mart shiver a little without quite realizing it.

"I don't understand this," La Boucherie said behind him, almost in a whisper, and Mart knew that he, too, felt that tiny unreasoning shiver. "He couldn't have lied to me. He said it was nothing but a meeting of Leaders. I don't like it!"

Neither did Mart. But he went down the hall in answer to La Boucherie's nudge, both of them walking softly. Secretaries should be scurrying to and fro, reporting Leaders coming and going. There was nothing. No one. Only the empty hall filled with that distant humming, and the big doors which warned all comers away.

They came to the doors. They pushed them open, cautiously. And so, in silence and without opposition, they found the Council at last.

There was a long, low table with a score of chairs around it, but only six had men in them. Six men, sitting motionless. They were Leaders, all of them, and each wore a round, dull cap of some pitted metal. Other caps lay on the table top, one before each chair. The men did not stir or turn as La Boucherie followed Mart into the room.

It was a perfectly plain room, windowless, with one door in the far wall. And that soft humming filled the air like a bodiless solid.

The six Leaders looked straight ahead, blank-faced, every gaze fixed on nothing. They seemed to be listening.

Mart touched the shoulder of the nearest man. He shook it. No response. He tried the next. Still nothing. La Boucherie spoke softly.

"Catalepsy?" he asked. And then, with sudden viciousness, "We'll see!"

The slam of a high-charge electronic beam made Mart jump. He whirled and saw the last man at the table slowly collapsing forward, his chest disintegrated by La Boucherie's blast. But even then no expression showed on his face.

Mart set his teeth grimly and said nothing. He knew he would have to find some way to disarm the man, and soon. Now he went forward without comment, skirting the fallen body, and followed La Boucherie toward the door in the wall.

"La Boucherie," he thought. "No man was ever named more accurately!"

The fat hand holding the gun still pointed at Mart, but with the other hand La Boucherie opened the door. Then the gunhand fell slowly. It was Mart's chance, but he did not even know it. Gripped in the same stunned amazement as the other man, he stood and stared across La Boucherie's shoulder.

A bright red light beat out in heavy waves, like heartbeats, from the room beyond. It was a small room. No—not a room at all. More accurately, it was a machine.

Walls, floor, ceiling were metal like the dull, pitted caps the Leaders wore. Infinitely complicated wiring filled the space between like a steely web. Smoothly, on oiled surfaces, metallic things slid with a measured motion to and fro among the webbing. Like shuttles, a little. Shuttles weaving their own strong webs. Or a Lachesis of some race more imperishable than flesh, weaving a more imperishable web of destiny.

Mart swung back to the table, knowing the answer to his question before he asked it aloud, but not daring to accept his own answer.

"What is that thing?" he demanded, shaking a capped man by the shoulder. "Answer me! That thing in the next room. Is it a machine? Is it alive? Is it intelligent? What is it?"

"I am a machine," the Leader's lips said. But it was not a man's voice that spoke. "I am not alive. I am not intelligent."

CHAPTER XIX

Thinking Machine

EXCEPT for that deep, continuing purr from the place beyond, La Boucherie's

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heavy breathing was the only sound in the room. After a long time La Boucherie put his own question, very softly:

"Who are you? To whom are we talking?"

"You are talking to a machine. An electronic calculating machine."

The Leader's lips framed the words but neither man had any illusion about who spoke. And Mart realized, without any further questions, how truly he had accused this culture of inflexibility. He knew now why it had operated along such rigid, unyielding patterns, so obediently to the will that guided it, so like a machine in itself.

"These men here," La Boucherie said. "What's happened to them?"

"They are getting answers from the electronic calculator. Those are mental-hookup helmets, to eliminate semantic difficulties."

"This has got to be stopped!" Mart was thinking desperately. "Somehow—but how? Where can I find an Atropos to cut the thread it's weaving?"

La Boucherie was speaking again, excitement in his voice.

"Will you answer our questions?"

"Yes."

"How do the Leaders use you?"

"The electronic calculating machine was built in nineteen-forty eight," the unhuman voice said. "It was improved from time to time. It was the first truly successful calculating machine. Electron tubes and electrical circuits were substituted for clumsy cogs and gears. Originally three thousand and seven tubes were used in the electronic calculating machine. Today there are twelve thousand, six hundred and eleven.

"The electronic calculating machine was invented to solve complex mechanical problems faster than human colloid brains could solve them. Gradually other problems were introduced. It was necessary to improve the electronic calculating machine so that it could break down problems into pure mathematics, solve them, and rephrase them into their original applications.

"All knowledge can be found mathematically. When the Cromwellians first established their rule, they found certain problems insoluble, except by the empirical method, which might have taken hundreds of years. They decided to use the electronic calculating machine to answer those problems. This was kept secret. All important decisions were submitted to the Council of Leaders, who apparently made the final judgment, but actually submitted those decisions to the electronic calculating machine for judgment. Thus the legend of the infallibility of the Council was built up. This is a brief reply to your questions."

"A machine!" La Boucherie whispered. "The world has been ruled by a machine!"

"Then the Cromwell Leaders aren't any smarter than anybody else," Mart said. "At least, they're not supermen. Anybody can use this machine and get the right answers."

"Anybody can, but only the Leaders have access to it," La Boucherie said. He swung toward the silent Leader. "I was a Leader myself once. But I was disqualified when I was nineteen. They told me my case was referred to the Council for decision. That means—" His mouth drew down at the corners. "It was this accursed machine that disqualified me!"

"That doesn't matter now," Mart said. "The main thing is what we'd better do. As long as the Leaders hold the secret of this gadget, they can get the right answers, and continue to rule. If we could spread the word—"

LA BOUCHERIE was walking toward the open door of the adjoining room. The lurid red light beat out upon his face. Suddenly he jerked out his smash-gun and fired through the doorway.

There was a hissing crackle. Havers saw La Boucherie step back a pace, frowning, mouth twisted. He fired again.

"La Boucherie!" Mart said.

He started forward, but the man had turned and was moving back toward the long table. There was no longer red light playing upon his face, but his eyes were red.

He paused opposite the Leader who had answered their questions. "How can you be destroyed?" he said softly.

"High-voltage currents will short-circuit the electronic calculating machine," the unhuman voice answered instantly.

"How can I do that?"

"By introducing a current from outside this building. The electronic calculating machine is automatically protected against such attacks within these walls."

Mart touched La Boucherie's arm. The fat man turned to face him, still scowling, the red light burning in his deep-set eyes.

"I was a Leader," La Boucherie whispered. "This thing threw me out!"

"Kennard—"

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La Boucherie shook his head. He looked oddly surprised.

"I hated you, Mart," he said. "For years I've hated you. And so many other things I've hated—the Leaders, and the Guardsmen with their arrogance and their confidence, and so many things. But I was wrong. I don't hate you any more. Or anything else, except the machine. I never knew what to hate before. But now I know."

And, without warning, La Boucherie laughed, spun on his heel, and charged out of the room.

OUTSIDE the building the Patrol planes were still circling on their never-ending round, under a dark, lowering ceiling of cloud. The rain beat down viciously. Mart got outside in time to see La Boucherie's shadowy form plunge without a pause into the torrential downpour.

"Wait!" he shouted, and thunder rolled deeply, drowning his voice.

From above a spotlight flamed into being, finding La Boucherie and then losing him. The white disc swung in widening circles, seeking its quarry again. A fountain of geysering earth told of a dropped bomb.

"He's insane!" Havers thought. "Insane, to run out of this haven, where the Patrol dared not drop its bombs, into the open where he is a clear target."

Once more the searchlight found La Boucherie. The running man swerved, but the beam followed him. Other beams focused on the fugitive, and two more bombs dropped. La Boucherie staggered, caught himself, and ran on.

Mart found himself running after La Boucherie. He did not quite know why. Perhaps he hated La Boucherie as much as the old Freeman had hated him. And certainly it was useless folly for Havers to throw his life away—a life that, by some miracle, might be useful to the Freemen later—but in that storm-blasted arena of wind and darkness and whirling lights there was no time for conscious reasoning. Mart Havers raced after the man he had hated for years, trying to save him from inevitable death.

The gale picked up La Boucherie and threw him thirty yards away. That was the only thing that saved his life momentarily. A bomb fountained where he had been, but now the searchlights were confused and darted about anxiously. So far none of them had touched Havers. Not that it mattered, for this was hopeless.

Yet he ran on.

Lightning made a pallid flame across the cloudroof. Both La Boucherie and Mart were clear targets in its flare. Havers saw the bulky form ahead of him, saw it staggering on, one arm flapping uselessly, and saw the wreck of the Weather Patrol rocket plane just beyond.

As the ships dived from above and the bombs crashed down, La Boucherie flung himself into the cabin of the jet-plane.

"La Boucherie!" Havers screamed against the wind and the thunder. "Don't try it!"

He was flung back by the concussion of a bomb. He lay dazed, half-conscious, until the beating of rain on his face brought him back to alertness. That, and something else—the deep, hoarse bellowing of jets.

Mart propped himself up on one elbow. What he saw froze him motionless. The rocket-plane was rising.

When an ordinary plane cracks up it cannot fly, since wings, motor, prop are all useless. But a rocket-ship cannot be immobilized as long as the rockets can be fired. La Boucherie sent the plane up.

Its jets could be fired, yes. But the controls were gone. It could not be guided. And La Boucherie was throwing full power into those roaring jets.

The Patrol ships dived, weapons blasting. But La Boucherie left them behind and below him in a matter of moments. The ordinary planes were too slow, and the Patrol jet jobs not maneuverable enough to hit him.

The rocketing plane, with its small wings, fled up toward the skies. Burning rockets made the blade of a flaming sword that stood for an instant above the storm-racked Earth.

Then lightning crackled from clouds to plane, and from plane to the ground.

Mart found himself on his feet, shouting, staring up, heedless of the blinding rain. He knew, now, what La Boucherie intended. Not insanity—not quite, though it meant suicide. La Boucherie had remembered the lessons in Weather Control Havers had given him. He had remembered the special equipment in this particular ship, the device for drawing lightning from static-heavy clouds. And Mart remembered, now, what the thinking machine had said—that it could be destroyed by high-voltage currents. A current from outside the protected building in which it stood.

Sword of flame stood still in the dark,

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thunder-ridden skies for an instant.

Sword of lightning crashed down, driving inexorably, instantly, through the massed Patrol ships.

Even above the storm the death scream of the thinking machine rose shrill and intense —an unbearable, knife-edged whine that rose higher and higher—

And stopped.

But Mart Havers was looking up, to the fiery sword that was La Boucherie's ship, out of control since before its take-off. It was turning now in the sky. The wavering blade of flame tipped, was level with the horizon, swung further.

Inverted, the sword dropped toward the Earth.

MART did not watch the end. Breathing in deep, racking gasps, he ran back toward the building. Once a Patrol ship dived toward him, but then he was almost at the threshold.

And across it.

His smash-gun was unholstered. He did not know what to expect now. But he intended to make sure that La Boucherie's death had served its purpose.

He came into the room with the long table. The six Leaders were still seated in their chairs, the metal helmets still on their heads. The man La Boucherie had killed was slumped down, but the others sat upright, staring straight ahead.

Mart came closer, his gun ready. He reached out to touch one of the men.

The Leader toppled from his chair. His body struck the floor heavily.

He was dead.

So were the others, Mart saw. But they did not matter particularly, now. What mattered was the machine. That was the heart, the brain, of the Cromwellian rule, the heart of any future government that could use it, and inevitably be forced into the rigid, mechanical pattern that meant destruction for mankind.

The machine gave the right answers. That was true. Yet they were not entirely the right answers—not for human beings. Men and women, Mart thought, could never be broken down into mathematical formulae and their problems solved by such a method.

Man must fight his own battles. He has always done so, and he always will, or he will perish. Thus he grows stronger. The men of the Weather Patrol, battling the ancient foe, were not the helpless weaklings Cromwell machine-rule had made of the rest of the race. Man must fight his own wars—against the storms, and the blizzards and tidal waves of his dark, unknown destiny. But that fight he must fight with his own resources, or lose his ultimate destiny.

Mart crossed the room. He paused at a doorway and stared at what was left of the electronic brain.

The man-made lightning had done its work efficiently. Even Havers, who was not a technician, saw that the machine would never operate again. It was wrecked.

He lifted the smash-gun, sure now that the barrier that had stopped a charge before would not stop it now. That distant humming had ceased. The machine was vulnerable—but it was dead.

He hesitated, and then slowly lowered the weapon.

"The world must see this," he thought. "Otherwise they won't believe. But I can show it to them, if I live. I can tell them they've been ruled by a machine, not by an infallible Cromwell Council of Leaders. Once they know the truth they will seek their own destiny!"

* * * * *

The rookie pilot and the old hand stood near their jet-plane, waiting for their take-off signal. A turmoil of thick clouds hung dully overhead. Once the low roaring of a supersonic job drifted down the wind.

"Almost time," the old hand said. "Cigarette?"

The rookie didn't answer. He was staring across the airstrip toward Administration.

The other man grinned.

"First time you've met Havers?" he asked. "Well, it won't be the last. You never know when he'll pop up at some outpost and make a check. He's been doing that for over twenty years now, and I've never seen him let down yet."

"Even outposts like this!" the rookie said half-wonderingly.

"Today's outpost is tomorrow's city. We keep pushing the frontiers forward. You were just a kid when the Cromwells were smashed, weren't you? There weren't any frontiers then. Exploration was forbidden. But now it's different."

The old hand shaded his eyes from a gleam of sunlight. Overhead, the clouds were breaking up as Weather Patrol planes worked their scientific magic, stey by step

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changing the climate to suit civilization's requirements.

"He's taking off," the rookie said disappointedly.

Across the field Mart Havers moved toward a ship. The old hand cocked his head, blinked, then returned Havers' buoyant wave. It was the old signal of Weather Patrol—"All clear".

"Sure he's taking off, kid. He's got a date in Reno with his wife."

"Oh, that's right. He's married, isn't he?" There was a pause.

"Yes. Married to a girl who used to be a Leader in the old days—never mind that. . . . There he goes! Quite a man, Mart Havers. I think I knew that twenty years ago, when he walked into my office."

"Did you know him then?"

"Mart Havers got his field training under me," Andre Kelvin said. "Probably that's why I can pull the jobs I want. Colonels aren't generally assigned to frontier work like this, but I asked for the assignment. Mart and I both like frontiers. . . . There's our call. Let's go, kid. We've got some weather to smash before a city can be built in this neck of the woods."

The two men in their bright blue uniforms turned toward the ship. The clouds were almost gone now, but toward the west a new bank was forming. Another job for the Storm Smashers, the shock troops of civilization.

The jets flamed, and the plane shot forward, rising from alien soil into the turbulent winds of Venus.

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THE CIRCLE OF ZERO

By STANLEY G. WEINBAUM

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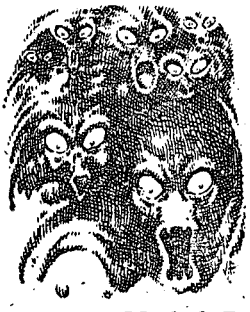
CHAPTER I

Try for Eternity

If there were a mountain a thousand miles high and every thousand years a bird flew over it, just brushing the peak with the tip of its wing, in the course of inconceivable eons the mountain would be worn away. Yet all those ages would not be one second to the length of eternity. . . .



I DON'T know what philosophical mind penned the foregoing, but the words keep recurring to me since last I saw old Aurore de Neant, erstwhile professor of psychology at Tulane. When, back in '24, I took that course in Morbid Psychology from him, I think the only reason for taking it at all was that I needed an eleven o'clock on Tuesdays and Thursdays to round out a lazy program.

I was gay Jack Anders, twenty-two years old, and the reason seemed sufficient. At least, I'm sure that dark and lovely Yvonne de Neant had nothing to do with it. She was but a slim child of sixteen.

Old de Neant liked me, Lord knows why, for I was a poor enough student. Perhaps it was because I never, to his knowledge, punned on his name. Aurore de Neant translates to Dawn of Nothingness, you see; you can imagine what students did to such a name. "Rising Zero"—"Empty Morning"—those were two of the milder sobriquets.

That was in '24. Five years later I was a bond salesman in New York and Professor Aurore de Neant was fired. I learned about it when he called me up. I had drifted quite out of touch with University days.

He was a thrifty sort. He had saved a comfortable sum, and had moved to New York and that's when I started seeing Yvonne again, now darkly beautiful as a Tanagra figurine. I was doing pretty well and was piling up a surplus against the day when Yvonne and I. . . .

At least that was the situation in August, 1929. In October of the same year I was as clean as a gnawed bone and old de Neant had but little more meat. I was young and could afford to laugh—he was old and he turned bitter. Indeed, Yvonne and I did little enough laughing when we thought of our own future—but we didn't brood like the professor.

I remember the evening he broached the subject of the Circle of Zero. It was a rainy, blustering fall night and his beard waggled in the dim lamplight like a wisp of grey mist. Yvonne and I had been staying in evenings of late. Shows cost money and I felt that she appreciated my talking to her father, and—after all—he retired early.

EDITOR'S NOTE

SOME stories are forgotten almost as soon as they are printed. Others stand the test of time.

Because "The Circle of Zero," by Stanley G. Weinbaum has stood this test, it has been nominated for SCIENTIFICTION'S HALL OF FAME and is reprinted here.

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I was peering into a spinning pool of mercury, watching two wild winged figures playing. . . .

She was sitting on the davenport at his side when he suddenly stabbed a gnarled finger at me and snapped, "Happiness depends on money!"

I was startled. "Well, it helps," I agreed.

His pale blue eyes glittered. "We must recover ours!" he rasped.

"How?"

"I know how. Yes, I know how." he grinned thinly. "They think I'm mad. *You* think I'm mad. Even Yvonne thinks so."

The girl said softly, reproachfully, "Father!"

"But I'm not," he continued. "You and Yvonne and all the fools holding chairs at universities—yes! But not I."

"I will be, all right, if conditions don't get better soon," I murmured. I was used to the old man's outbursts.

"They will be better for us," he said, calming. "Money! We will do anything for money, won't we, Anders?"

"Anything honest."

"Yes, anything honest. Time is honest, isn't it? An honest cheat, because it takes everything human and turns it into dust." He peered at my puzzled face. "I will explain," he said, "how we can cheat time."

"Cheat—"

"Yes. Listen, Jack. Have you ever stood in a strange place and felt a sense of having been there before? Have you ever taken a

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trip and sensed that sometime, somehow, you had done exactly the same thing—when you know you hadn't?"

"Of course. Everyone has. A memory of the present, Bergson calls it."

"Bergson is a fool! Philosophy without science. Listen to me." He leaned forward. "Did you ever hear of the Law of Chance?"

I laughed. "My business is stocks and bonds. I *ought* to know of it."

"Ah," he said, "but not enough of it. Suppose I have a barrel with a million trillion white grains of sand in it and one black grain. You stand and draw single grains, one after the other, look at each one and throw it back into the barrel. What are the odds against drawing the black grain?"

"A million trillion to one, on each draw."

"And if you draw half of the million trillion grains?"

"Then the odds are even."

"So!" he said. "In other words, if you draw long enough, even though you return each grain to the barrel and draw again, some day you will draw the black one—*if you try long enough!*"

"Yes," I said.

HE half smiled.

"Suppose now you tried for eternity?"

"Eh?"

"Don't you see, Jack? In eternity the Law of Chance functions perfectly. In eternity, sooner or later, every possible combination of things and events must happen. *Must* happen, *if* it's a possible combination. I say, therefore, that in eternity, *whatever can happen, will happen!*" His blue eyes blazed in pale fire.

I was a trifle dazed. "I guess you're right," I muttered.

"Right! Of course I'm right. Mathematics is infallible. Now do you see the conclusion?"

"Why—that sooner or later everything will happen."

"Bah! It is true that there is eternity in the future; we cannot imagine time ending. But Flammarion, before he died, pointed out that there is also an eternity in the past. Since in eternity everything possible must happen, it follows that everything *must already have happened!*"

I gasped. "Wait a minute! I don't see—"

"Stupidity!" he hissed. "It is but to say with Einstein that not only space is curved, but time. To say that, after untold eons of millenniums, the same things repeat themselves because they must! The Law of Chance says they must, given time enough. The past and the future are the same thing, because everything that will happen must already have happened. Can't you follow so simple a chain of logic?"

"Why—yes. But where does it lead?"

"To our money! To our money!"

"What?"

"Listen. Do not interrupt. In the past all possible combinations of atoms and circumstances must have occurred." He paused then stabbed that bony finger of his at me. "Jack Anders, *you* are a possible combination of atoms and circumstances! Possible because you exist at this moment!"

"You mean—that *I* have happened before?"

"How apt you are! Yes, you have happened before and will again."

"Transmigration!" I gulped. "That's unscientific."

"Indeed?" He frowned as if in effort to gather his thoughts. "The poet Robert Burns was buried under an apple tree. When, years after his death, he was to be removed to rest among the great men of Westminster Abbey, do you know what they found? Do you know?"

"I'm sorry but I don't."

"They found a root! A root with a bulge for a head, branch roots for arms and legs and little rootlets for fingers and toes. The apple tree had eaten Bobby Burns—but who had eaten the apples?"

"Who—what?"

"Exactly. Who and what? The substance that had been Burns was in the bodies of Scotch countrymen and children, in the bodies of caterpillars who had eaten the leaves and become butterflies and been eaten by birds, in the wood of the tree. Where is Bobby Burns? Transmigration, I tell you! Isn't that transmigration?"

"Yes—but not what you meant about me. His body may be living, but in a thousand different forms."

"Ah! And when some day, eons and eternities in the future, the Laws of Chance form another nebula that will cool to another sun and another earth, is there not the same chance that those scattered atoms may reassemble another Bobby Burns?"

"But what a chance! Trillions and trillions to one!"

"But eternity, Jack! In eternity that one chance out of all those trillions must hap-

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pen—*must* happen!"

I was floored. I stared at Yvonne's pale and lovely features, then at the glistening old eyes of Aurore de Neant.

"You win," I said with a long sigh. "But what of it? This is still nineteen twenty-nine, and our money's still sunk in a very sick securities market."

"*Money!*" he groaned. "Don't you see? That memory we started from—that sense of having done a thing before—that's a memory out of the infinitely remote future. If only—if only one could remember clearly! But I have a way." His voice rose suddenly to a shrill scream. "Yes, I have a way!"

Wild eyes glared at me. I said, "A way to remember our former incarnations?" One had to humor the old professor. "To remember—the future?"

"Yes! Reincarnation!" His voice crackled wildly. "*Re-in-carnatione,* which is Latin for 'by the thing in the carnation', but it wasn't a carnation—it was an apple tree. The carnation is *dianthus carophyllus,* which proved that the Hottentots plant carnations on the graves of their ancestors, whence the expression 'nippped in the bud.' If carnations grow on apple trees—"

"Father!" cut in Yvonne sharply. "You're tired!" Her voice softened. "Come. You're going to bed."

"Yes," he cackled. "To a bed of carnations."

CHAPTER II

Memory of Things Past

SOME evenings later Aurore de Neant reverted to the same topic. He was clear enough as to where he had left off.

"So in this millennially dead past," he began suddenly, "there was a year nineteen twenty-nine and two fools named Anders and de Neant, who invested their money in what are sarcastically called securities. There was a clown's panic, and their money vanished." He leered fantastically at me.

"Wouldn't it be nice if they could remember what happened in, say, the months from December, nineteen twenty-nine, to June, nineteen thirty—next year?" His voice was suddenly whining. "They could get their money back then!"

I humored him. "If they could remember."

"They can!" he blazed. "They can!"

"How?"

His voice dropped to a confidential softness. "Hypnotism! You studied Morbid Psychology under me, didn't you, Jack? Yes—I remember."

"But, hypnotism!" I objected. "Every psychiatrist uses that in his treatments and no one has remembered a previous incarnation or anything like it."

"No. They're fools, these doctors and psychiatrists. Listen—do you remember the three stages of the hypnotic state as you learned them?"

"Yes. Somnambulism, lethargy, catalepsy."

"Right. In the first the subject speaks, answers questions. In the second he sleeps deeply. In the third, catalepsy, he is rigid, stiff, so that he can be laid across two chairs, sat on—all that nonsense."

"I remember. What of it?"

He grinned bleakly. "In the first stage the subject remembers everything that ever happened during his life. His subconscious mind is dominant and that never forgets. Correct?"

"So we were taught."

He leaned tensely forward. "In the second stage, lethargy, my theory is that he remembers everything that happened in his other lives! He remembers the future!"

"Huh? Why doesn't someone do it, then?"

"He remembers while he sleeps. He forgets when he wakes. That's why. But I believe that with proper training he can learn to remember."

"And you're going to try?"

"Not I. I know too little of finance. I wouldn't know how to interpret my memories."

"Who, then?"

"You!" He jabbed that long finger against me.

I was thoroughly startled. "Me?. Oh, no! Not a chance of it!"

"Jack," he said querulously, "didn't you study hypnotism in my course? Didn't you learn how harmless it is? You know what tommy-rot the idea is of one mind dominating another. You know the subject really hypnotizes himself, that no one can hypnotize an unwilling person. Then what are you afraid of?"

I—well, I didn't know what to answer. "I'm not afraid," I said grimly. "I just don't like it."

"You're afraid!"

"I'm not!"

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"You are!" He was growing excited.

It was at that moment that Yvonne's footsteps sounded in the hall. His eyes glittered. He looked at me with a sinister hint of cunning.

"I dislike cowards," he whispered. His voice rose. "So does Yvonne!"

THE girl entered, perceiving his excitement. "Oh!" she frowned. "Why do you have to take these theories so to heart, father?"

"Theories?" he screeched. "Yes! I have a theory that when you walk you stand still and the sidewalk moves back. No—then the sidewalk moves back. No—then the sidewalk would split if two people walked toward each other—or maybe it's elastic. Of course it's elastic! That's why the last mile is the longest. It's been stretched!"

Yvonne got him to bed.

Well, he talked me into it. I don't know how much was due to my own credulity and how much to Yvonne's solemn dark eyes. I half-believed the professor by the time he'd spent another evening in argument but I think the clincher was his veiled threat to forbid Yvonne my company. She'd have obeyed him if it killed her. She was from New Orleans too, you see, and of Creole blood.

I won't describe that troublesome course of training. One has to develop the hypnotic habit. It's like any other habit, and must be formed slowly. Contrary to the popular opinion morons and people of low intelligence can't ever do it. It takes real concentration—the whole knack of it is the ability to concentrate one's attention—and I don't mean the hypnotist, either.

I mean the subject. The hypnotist hasn't a thing to do with it except to furnish the necessary suggestion by murmuring, "Sleep—sleep—sleep—sleep. . . ." And even that isn't necessary once you learn the trick of it.

I spent half an hour or more nearly every evening, learning that trick. It was tedious and a dozen times I became thoroughly disgusted and swore to have no more to do with the farce. But always, after the half-hour's humoring of de Neant, there was Yvonne, and boredom vanished. As a sort of reward, I suppose, the old man took to leaving us alone. And we used our time, I'll wager, to better purpose than he used his.

But I began to learn, little by little. Came a time, after three weeks of tedium, when I was able to cast myself into a light somnambulistic state. I remember how the glitter of the cheap stone in Professor de Neant's ring grew until it filled the world and how his voice, mechanically dull, murmured like the waves in my ears. I remember everything that transpired during those minutes, even his query, "Are you sleeping?" and my automatic reply, "Yes."

By the end of November we had mastered the second state of lethargy and then—I don't know why, but a sort of enthusiasm for the madness took hold of me. Business was at a standstill. I grew tired of facing customers to whom I had sold bonds at a par that were now worth fifty or less and trying to explain why. After a while I began to drop in on the professor during the afternoon and we went through the insane routine again and again.

Yvonne comprehended only a part of the bizarre scheme. She was never in the room during our half-hour trials and knew only vaguely that we were involved in some sort of experiment which was to restore our lost money. I don't suppose she had much faith in it but she always indulged her father.

It was early in December that I began to remember things. Dim and formless things at first—sensations that utterly eluded the rigidities of words. I tried to express them to de Neant but it was hopeless.

"A circular feeling," I'd say. "No—not exactly—a sense of spiral—not that, either. Roundness—I can't recall it now. It slips away."

He was jubilant. "It comes!" he whispered, grey beard awaggle and pale eyes glittering. "You begin to remember!"

"But what good is a memory like that?"

"Wait! It will come clearer. Of course not all your memories will be of the sort we can use. They will be scattered. Through all the multifold eternities of the past-future circle you can't have been always Jack Anders, securities salesman.

"There will be fragmentary memories, recollections of times when your personality was partially existent, when the Laws of Chance had assembled a being who was not quite Jack Anders, in some period of the infinite worlds that must have risen and died in the span of eternities.

"But somewhere, too, the same atoms, the same conditions, must have made *you*. You're the black grain among the trillions of white grains and, with all eternity to draw

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in from, you must have been drawn before —many, many times."

"Do you suppose," I asked suddenly, "that anyone exists twice on the same earth? Reincarnation in the sense of the Hindus?"

He laughed scornfully. "The age of the earth is somewhere between a thousand million and three thousand million years. What proportion of eternity is that?"

"Why—no proportion at all. Zero."

"Exactly, And zero represents the chance of the same atoms combining to form the same person twice in one cycle of a planet. But I have shown that trillions, or trillions of trillions of years ago, there *must* have been another earth, another Jack Anders, and"—his voice took on that whining note—"another crash that ruined Jack Anders and old de Neant. That is the time you must remember out of lethargy."

"Catalepsy!" I said. "What would one remember in that?"

"God knows."

"What a mad scheme!" I said suddenly. "What a crazy pair of fools we are!" The adjectives were a mistake.

"Mad? Crazy?" His voice became a screech. "Old de Neant is mad, eh? Old Dawn of Nothingness is crazy! You think time doesn't go in a circle, don't you? Do you know what a circle represents? I'll tell you!

"A circle is the mathematical symbol for zero! Time is zero—time is a circle. I have a theory that the hands of a clock are really the noses, because they're on the clock's face, and since time is a circle they go round and round and round. . . ."

Yvonne slipped quietly into the room and patted her father's furrowed forehead. She must have been listening.

CHAPTER III

Nightmare or Truth?

"LOOK here," I said at a later time to de Neant. "If the past and future are the same thing, then the future's as unchangeable as the past, How, then, can we expect to change it by recovering our money?"

"Change it?" he snorted. "How do you know we're changing it? How do you know that this same thing wasn't done by that Jack Anders and de Neant back on the other side of eternity? I say it *was*!"

I subsided, and the weird business went on. My memories—if they were memories—were becoming clearer now. Often and often I saw things out of my own immediate past of twenty-seven years, though of course de Neant assured me that these were visions from the past of that other self on the far side of time.

I saw other things too, incidents that I couldn't place in my experience, though I couldn't be quite sure they didn't belong there. I might have forgotten, you see, since they were of no particular importance. I recounted everything dutifully to the old man immediately upon awakening and sometimes that was difficult—like trying to find words for a half remembered dream.

There were other memories as well—bizarre, outlandish dreams that had little parallel in human history. These were always vague and sometimes very horrible and only their inchoate and formless character kept them from being utterly nerve-racking and terrifying.

At one time, I recall, I was gazing through a little crystalline window into a red fog through which moved indescribable faces—not human, not even associable with anything I had ever seen. On another occasion I was wandering, clad in furs, across a cold grey desert and at my side was a woman who was not quite Yvonne.

I remember calling her Pyroniva, and knowing that the name meant "Snowy-fire." And here and there in the air about us floated fungoid things, bobbing around like potatoes in a water-bucket. And once we stood very quiet while a menacing form that was only remotely like the small fungi droned purposefully far overhead, toward some unknown objective.

At still another time I was peering, fascinated, into a spinning pool of mercury, watching an image therein of two wild winged figures playing in a roseate glade—not at all human in form but transcendently beautiful, bright and iridescent.

I felt a strange kinship between these two creatures and myself and Yvonne but I had no inkling of what they were, nor upon what world, nor at what time in eternity, nor even of what nature was the room that held the spinning pool that pictured them.

Old Aurore de Neant listened carefully to the wild word-pictures I drew.

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"Fascinating!" he muttered. "Glimpses of an infinitely distant future caught from a ten-fold infinitely remote past. These things you describe are not earthly; it means that somewhere, sometime, men are actually to burst the prison of space and visit other worlds. Some day...."

"If these glimpses aren't simply nightmares," I said.

"They're not nightmares," he snapped, "but they might as well be for all the value they are to us." I could see him struggle to calm himself. "Our money is still gone. We must try, keep trying for years, for centuries, until we get the black grain of sand, because black sand is a sign of gold-bearing ore...." He paused. "What am I talking about?" he said querulously.

Well, we kept trying. Interspersed with the wild, all but indescribable visions came others almost rational. The thing became a fascinating game. I was neglecting my business—though that was small loss—to chase dreams with old Professor Aurore de Neant.

I spent evenings, afternoons and finally mornings, too, living in the slumber of the lethargic state or telling the old man what fantastic things I had dreamed—or, as he said, remembered. Reality became dim to me. I was living in an outlandish world of fancy and only the dark, tragic eyes of Yvonne tugged at me, pulled me back into the daylight world of sanity.

I HAVE mentioned more nearly rational visions. I recall one—a city—but what a city! Sky-piercing, white and beautiful and the people of it were grave with the wisdom of gods, pale and lovely people, but solemn, wistful, sad. There was the aura of brilliance and wickedness that hovers about all great cities, that was born, I suppose, in Babylon and will remain until great cities are no more.

But there was something else, something intangible. I don't know exactly what to call it but perhaps the word decadence is as close as any word we have. As I stood at the base of a colossal structure there was the whir of quiet machinery but it seemed to me, nevertheless, that the city was dying.

It might have been the moss that grew green on the north walls of the buildings. It might have been the grass that pierced here and there through the cracks of the marble pavements. Or it might have been only the grave and sad demeanor of the pale inhabitants. There was something that hinted of a doomed city and a dying race.

A strange thing happened when I tried to describe this particular memory to old de Neant. I stumbled over the details, of course—these visions from the unplumbed depths of eternity were curiously hard to fix between the rigid walls of words. They tended to grow vague, to elude the waking memory. Thus, in this description I had forgotten the name of the city.

"It was called," I said hesitatingly, "Termis or Termoplia, or...."

"Termopolis!" cried de Neant impatiently. "City of the End!"

I stared amazed. "That's it! But how did you know?" In the sleep of lethargy, I was sure, one never speaks.

A queer, cunning look flashed in his pale eyes. "I knew," he muttered. "I knew." He would say no more.

But I think I saw that city once again. It was when I wandered over a brown and treeless plain, not like that cold grey desert but apparently an arid and barren region of the earth. Dim on the western horizon was the circle of a great cool reddish sun. It had always been there, I remembered, and knew with some other part of my mind that the vast brake of the tides had at last slowed the earth's rotation to a stop, that day and night no longer chased each other around the planet.

The air was biting cold and my companions and I—there were half a dozen of us—moved in a huddled group as if to lend each other warmth from our half-naked bodies. We were all of us thin-legged, skinny creatures with oddly deep chests and enormous, luminous eyes, and the one nearest me was again a woman who had something of Yvonne in her but very little. And I was not quite Jack Anders, either. But some remote fragment of me survived in that barbaric brain.

Beyond a hill was the surge of an oily sea. We crept circling about the mound and suddenly I perceived that sometime in the infinite past that hill had been a city. A few Gargantuan blocks of stone lay crumbling on it and one lonely fragment of a ruined wall rose gauntly to four or five times a man's height. It was at this spectral remnant that the leader of our miserable crew gestured then spoke in somber tones—not English words but I understood.

"The Gods," he said—"the Gods who piled

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stones upon stones are dead and harm us not who pass the place of their dwelling."

I knew what that was meant to be. It was an incantation, a ritual—to protect us from the spirits that lurked among the ruins—the ruins, I believe, of a city built by our own ancestors thousands of generations before.

As we passed the wall I looked back at a flicker of movement and saw something hideously like a black rubber doormat flop itself around the angle of the wall. I drew closer to the woman beside me and we crept on down to the sea for water—yes, water, for with the cessation of the planet's rotation rainfall had vanished also, and all life huddled near the edge of the undying sea and learned to drink its bitter brine.

I didn't glance again at the hill which had been Termopolis, the City of the End. But I knew that some chance-born fragment of Jack Anders had been—or will be (what difference, if time *is* a circle?)—witness of an age close to the day of humanity's doom.

It was early in December that I had the first memory of something that might have been suggestive of success. It was a simple and very sweet memory, just Yvonne and I in a garden that I knew was the inner grounds on one of the New Orleans' old homes—one of those built in the Continental fashion about a court.

WE sat on a stone bench beneath the oleanders and I slipped my arm very tenderly about her and murmured, "Are you happy, Yvonne?"

She looked at me with those tragic eyes of hers and smiled, and then answered, "As happy as I have ever been."

And I kissed her.

That was all but it was important. It was vastly important because it was definitely not a memory out of my own personal past. You see, I had never sat beside Yvonne in a garden sweet with oleanders in the Old Town of New Orleans and I had never kissed her until we met in New York.

Aurore de Neant was elated when I described this vision.

"You see!" he gloated. "There is evidence. You have remembered the future! Not your own future, of course, but that of another ghostly Jack Anders, who died trillions and quadrillions of years ago."

"But it doesn't help us, does it?" I asked.

"Oh, it will come now! You wait. The thing we want will come."

And it did, within a week. This memory was curiously bright and clear, and familiar in every detail. I remember the day. It was the eighth of December, 1929, and I had wandered aimlessly about in search of business during the morning. In the grip of that fascination I mentioned I drifted to de Neant's apartment after lunch. Yvonne left us to ourselves, as was her custom, and we began.

This was, as I said, a sharply outlined memory—or dream. I was leaning over my desk in the company's office, that too-seldom visited office. One of the other salesmen—Summers was his name—was leaning over my shoulder.

We were engaged in the quite customary pastime of scanning the final market reports in the evening paper. The print stood out, clear as reality itself. I glanced without surprise at the date-line. It was Thursday, April 27th, 1930—almost five months in the future!

Not that I realized that during the vision, of course. The day was merely the present to me. I was simply looking over the list of the day's trading. Figures—familiar names. Telephone, 210¾—U. S. Steel—161; Paramount, 68½.

I jabbed a finger at Steel. "I bought that at 72," I said over my shoulder to Summers. "I sold out everything today. Every stock I own. I'm getting out before there's a secondary crash."

"Lucky stiff!" he murmured. "Buy at the December lows and sell out now! Wish I'd had money to do it." He paused. "What you gonna do? Stay with the company?"

"No, I've enough to live on. I'm going to stick it in Governments and paid-up insurance and live on the income. I've had enough of gambling."

"You lucky stiff!" he said again. "I'm sick of the Street too. Staying in New York?"

"For a while. Just till I get my stuff invested properly; Yvonne and I are going to New Orleans for the winter." I paused. "She's had a tough time of it. I'm glad we're where we are."

"Who wouldn't be?" asked Summers, and then again, "You lucky stiff!"

De Neant was frantically excited when I described this to him.

"That's it!" he screamed. "We buy! We buy tomorrow! We sell on the twenty-seventh of May and then—New Orleans!"

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Of course I was nearly equally enthusiastic. "By heaven!" I said. "It's worth the risk! We'll do it!" And then a sudden hopeless thought. "Do it? Do it with what? I have less than a hundred dollars to my name. And you...."

The old man groaned. "I have nothing," he said in abrupt gloom. "Only the annuity we live on. One can't borrow on that." Again a gleam of hope. "The banks. We'll borrow from them!"

I had to laugh, although it was a bitter laugh. "What bank would lend us money on a story like this? They wouldn't lend Rockefeller himself money to play this sick market, not without secrity. We're sunk, that's all."

I looked at his pale, worried eyes. "Sunk," he echoed dully. Then again that wild gleam. "*Not* sunk!" he yelled. "How can we be? We *did* do it! You remembered our doing it! We must have found the way!"

I gazed speechless. Suddenly a queer, mad thought flashed over me. This other Jack Anders, this ghost of quadrillions of centuries past—or future—he too must be watching, or had watched, or yet would watch, me—the Jack Anders of this cycle of eternity.

He must be watching as anxiously as I to discover the means. Each of us watching the other—neither of us knowing the answer. The blind leading the blind! I laughed at the irony.

But old de Neant was not laughing. The strangest expression I have ever seen in a man's eyes was in his as he repeated very softly, "We must have found the way because it *was* done. At least you and Yvonne found the way."

"Then all of us must," I answered sourly.

"Yes, Oh, yes. Listen to me, Jack. I am an old man, old Aurore de Neant. I am old Dawn of Nothingness and my mind is cracking. Don't shake your head!" he snapped. "I am not mad. I am simply misunderstood. None of you understand.

"Why, I have a theory that trees, grass and people do not grow taller at all. They grow by pushing the earth away from them, which is why you keep hearing that the earth is getting smaller every day. But you don't understand—Yvonne doesn't understand."

The girl must have been listening. Without my seeing her, she had slipped into the room and put her arms gently about her father's shoulders, while she gazed across at me with anxious eyes.

CHAPTER IV

The Bitter Fruit

THERE was one more vision, irrelevant in a way, yet vitally important in another way. It was the next evening. An early December snowfall was dropping its silent white beyond the windows and the ill-heated apartment of the de Neants was draughty and chill.

I saw Yvonne shiver as she greeted me and again as she left the room. I noticed that old de Neant followed her to the door with his thin arms about her and that he returned with very worried eyes.

"She is New Orleans born," he murmured. "This dreadful Arctic climate will destroy her. We must find a way at once."

That vision was a somber one. I stood on a cold, wet, snowy ground—just myself and Yvonne and one who stood beside an open grave. Behind us stretched rows of crosses and white tomb stones, but in our corner the place was ragged, untended, unconsecrated. The priest was saying, "And these are things that only God understands."

I slipped a comforting arm about Yvonne. She raised her dark, tragic eyes and whispered, "It was yesterday, Jack—just yesterday—that he said to me, 'Next winter you shall spend in New Orleans, Yvonne.' Just yesterday!"

I tried a wretched smile, but I could only stare mournfully at her forlorn face, watching a tear that rolled slowly down her right cheek, hung glistening there a moment, then was joined by another to splash unregarded on the black bosom of her dress.

That was all but how could I describe that vision to old de Neant? I tried to evade. He kept insisting.

"There wasn't any hint of the way," I told him. Useless—at last I had to tell anyway.

He was very silent for a full minute. "Jack," he said finally, "do you know when I said that to her about New Orleans? This morning when we watched the snow. This morning!"

I didn't know what to do. Suddenly this whole concept of remembering the future seemed mad, insane. In all my memories

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there had been not a single spark of real proof, not a single hint of prophecy.

So I did nothing at all but simply gazed silently as old Aurore de Neant walked out of the room. And when, two hours later, while Yvonne and I talked, he finished writing a certain letter and then shot himself through the heart—why, that proved nothing either.

It was the following day that Yvonne and I, his only mourners, followed old Dawn of Nothingness to his suicide's grave. I stood beside her and tried as best I could to console her, and roused myself from a dark reverie to hear her words.

"It was yesterday, Jack—just yesterday—that he said to me, 'Next winter you shall spend in New Orleans, Yvonne'. Just yesterday!"

I watched the tear that rolled slowly down her right cheek hung glistening there a moment, then was joined by another to splash on the black bosom of her dress.

But it was later, during the evening, that the most ironic revelation of all occurred. I was gloomily blaming myself for the weakness of indulging old de Neant in the mad experiment that had led, in a way, to his death.

It was as if Yvonne read my thoughts, for she said suddenly:

"He was breaking, Jack. His mind was going. I heard all those strange things he kept murmuring to you."

"What?"

"I listened, of course, behind the door there. I never left him alone. I heard him whisper the queerest things—faces in a red fog, words about a cold grey desert, the name Pyronive, the word Termopolis. He leaned over you as you sat with closed eyes and he whispered, whispered all the time."

Irony of ironies! It was old de Neant's mad mind that had suggested the visions! He had described them to me as I sat in the sleep of lethargy!

LATER we found the letter he had written and again I was deeply moved. The old man had carried a little insurance. Just a week before he had borrowed on one of the policies to pay the premiums on it and the others. But the letter—well, he had made *me* beneficiary of half the amount! And the instructions were—

"You, Jack Anders, will take both your money and Yvonne's and carry out the plan as you know I wish."

Lunacy! De Neant had found the way to provide the money but—I couldn't gamble Yvonne's last dollar on the scheme of a disordered mind.

"What will we do?" I asked her. "Of course the money's all yours. I won't touch it."

"Mine?" she echoed. "Why, no. We'll do as he wished. Do you think I'd not respect his last request?"

Well, we did. I took those miserable few thousands and spread them around in that sick December market. You remember what happened, how during the spring the prices skyrocketed as if they were heading back toward 1929, when actually the depression was just gathering breath.

I rode that market like a circus performer. I took profits and pyramided them back and, on April 27th, with our money multiplied fifty times, I sold out and watched the market slide back.

Coincidence? Very likely. After all, Aurore de Neant's mind was clear enough most of the time. Other economists predicted that spring rise. Perhaps he foresaw it too. Perhaps he staged this whole affair just to trick us into the gamble, one which we'd never have dared risk otherwise. And then when he saw we were going to fail from lack of money he took the only means he had of providing it.

Perhaps. That's the rational explanation, and yet—that vision of ruined Termopolis keeps haunting me. I see again the grey cold desert of the floating fungi. I wonder often about the immutable Law of Chance and about a ghostly Jack Anders somewhere beyond eternity.

For perhaps he does—did—will exist. Otherwise, how to explain that final vision? What of Yvonne's words beside her father's grave? Could he have foreseen those words and whispered them to me? Possibly. But what, then, of those two tears that hung glistening, merged and dropped from her cheeks?

What of them?

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Next Issue: THROUGH THE PURPLE CLOUD, by Jack Williamson

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As the missile struck Stewart, he gave a cry of pain, and the fulmination rod clattered to the floor

LODANA

By CARL JACOBI

A wave of rebellion and suicide follows in the wake of the uncovering of an old shrine on the Sixth Moon of Jupiter!

IF I HADN'T known otherwise, I would have said that back in the Twentieth Century the forefathers of Jimmy Dumont must have operated a mail-order business. Either that, or he had a postal-rocket for a godmother. His one interest in life seemed to be the purchase of goods by remote control.

Of course I'll admit that out here on the Sixth Moon of Jupiter the arrival of the monthly mail ship is an event of great importance. We count the days until the ship arrives, and then for the next five or six hours we curse the whim that led us to sign up for a three-year hitch with Sounds Ltd.

There were five of us at BeTaba, five Earth men surrounded by some pretty alien landscape and by a couple of hundred treacher-

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ous Mutants. The former accounts no doubt for the "96 or better" psychiatric test requirement, and the latter, for the cumulative salary bonus which the company paid us if we stuck the full three years.

Jimmy Dumont definitely was a square peg in a round hole. What he didn't know about the duties of a Sounds Ltd. man was colossal, and he didn't seem to care either.

"Mining sound!" he would say with a sneer. "It's a crazy business, crazier than those wafer-headed Mutants."

It *was* too, although the Philosopher called it distinctive. Twenty years ago some ambitious explorer had discovered the BeTaba caverns. They weren't so much as caverns go; they contained little or no artifacts, and only the hieroglyphics on the walls convinced him that they were the home of the lost Upper Caste Sixtian race.

Then a year later someone happened to examine the blue crystals in the cavern's dome. And that was the beginning of Sounds Ltd, and the forthcoming trouble.

Those crystals were sixty per cent pure *paxite* and forty per cent pure *carponium*. During the time the caverns had been occupied they had been in a state of flux. Now they contained a complete "frozen" record of all sounds ever made in those caverns.

Layer by layer, strata by strata, they had captured for posterity the speeches, the music, the revels, the chance conversations of that lost race. All that was necessary to release the sounds was to subject the crystals to mechanical tension and the simultaneous amplification of two Haranta tubes, one revolving clockwise, the other counter clockwise.

AT FIRST, before any mining restrictions were made by the Government, the crystals were chipped out at random, thus spoiling any continuity to the sounds that might have been discovered.

The fad of BeTaba crystals is an old story now. Every bourgeois house on Mars, Venus and Earth had one or more of them inset in the walls for use as doorbells, and so on.

During those zany days Sounds Ltd. was a pretty prosperous concern. But today, although the mining of the crystals goes on, the market has been reduced to the demands of libraries, historical societies, and research organizations. Furthermore, we cut the crystals according to an outlined chart now, except in the more remote caverns, and much of the thrill of discovery has gone.

That is, I thought it had gone. Until the trouble that started with Jimmy Dumont.

Jimmy seemed to worship that monthly mail ship. Now Jupiter's Sixth Moon isn't exactly a frontier. There are three good-sized cities—Trolontis, Parcea, and New Chicago. But there was a magnetic band between the BeTaba caverns and the cities which made navigation extremely difficult. If the ship had come every week instead of once a month, my guess is that Jimmy would have blown his top completely.

Sending for stuff by mail! That was the Kid's hobby. He dispatched letters ordering free samples of shaving cream, razor blades, fancy cigarette lighters. He ordered new fangled visi sets, chemical outfits, and a thousand and one other things. His quarters were piled high with the stuff, in addition to mountains of catalogues and magazine advertising sections.

Psychologically speaking, of course, in most cases he didn't care a rap for the stuff he got. It was just a hangover from childhood, the anticipation of things yet to come. At first I was pretty tough on him. I said some pointed things about "growing up" until the Philosopher drew me aside one day.

"Go easy on him, Kendricks," he said. "You see he hasn't anyone to write letters to him."

The Philosopher was Stewart. He was a quiet bookish fellow, tall and lean, with a high forehead. Besides him, the Kid, and myself, there was Holmes, the officer-in-charge, and Fleming. It was our job to see that the Mutants cut the crystals according to plan and didn't run amok and kill us or themselves.

The first of September brought the monthly mail ship and the initial seed to our trouble. I got the first hint of the latter when the Kid burst through the airlock into our cuddy. His space suit was half open and there was a wild gleam in his eyes.

"It's come!" he said. "Cost me a month's salary, but it's worth it. Take a look at that!"

He placed a half-open packing case on the table. Inside I could see a small plastic box, topped with a turn-table, an elliptic coil and what looked like an oversized Micro-Wellman tube. "What is it?" I said.

"Can't you see?" the Kid said. "It's a supersonic receiver, guaranteed to pick up and amplify vibrations up to thirty thousand cycles."

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"I see," I said sarcastically. "And just what are you going to do with this piece of apparatus?"

Dumont gave me a withering look. "Why, I'm going to test the BeTaba crystals, that's what I'm going to do."

And that was the queer thing about the whole affair. Here BeTaba crystals had been known, heard, and sold for almost twenty years, and it had never occurred to anyone that all of the sounds imprisoned in them might not be audible to the ear.

Of course there was no good reason why the crystals should hold high frequency vibrations. The race that had lived in the caverns supposedly had reached only a Grade C-5 state of civilization according to the Mokart scale. Those old-timers had known how to throw a banquet or a festival, all unaware that every word they uttered was being made immortal in the perfectly acousticized dome above them, but they hadn't known anything about the modern concept of sound waves.

But that didn't bother the Kid a bit. He set up a small laboratory in his room, and every time the Mutants brought a car of crystals up out of the mine, he took a number of samples and proceeded to test them for supersonic vibrations.

"You see," he said, "we really don't know what might be hidden in those crystals. We've only scratched the surface."

On the night of the fifteenth of September the five of us were in Central Quarters in the cuddy. The Philosopher was reading London's "Perfection of Races." Holmes was going over his reports. And Fleming and I were playing a game of Martian rummy.

The Kid had moved his sonic receiver out from his room and was busy putting little segments of crystals on the slowly revolving turn-table. He wasn't using the headphones now but had his ear close to a monorone parabolic horn which emitted no sound except an intermittent hissing.

Suddenly, however, the silence was broken. A voice sounded in the room, issuing from the horn. A woman's voice, it was, soft and throaty as the vibration cycles were reduced by the receiver, and filled with lure and enchantment.

Stewart's book slipped from his hands. He stared at the Kid's apparatus with speculative, bewildered eyes. Holmes, the officer-in-charge, half rose from his chair.

The magic voice continued, not singing, not talking, but crooning a sort of spoken lullaby. The words seemed to be no part of a known language, but rather a combination of vowels and consonants arranged in a strange and euphonious way.

And this was the horror of it! As the honeyed voice sounded, you got the impression that it was eating into your very brain!

On and on the voice continued, a black litany of horror. And then suddenly it stopped.

Stewart, the Philosopher, crossed to the Kid's side and stared down at the bit of crystal on the turn-table.

"Did that voice come from that crystal?" he demanded.

Jimmy Dumont nodded.

"From a supersonic register?"

"Yes." The Kid glanced at a dial. "From eighty thousand cycles. I stepped the receiver up."

Stewart picked up the crystal and turned it over and over in his hands.

"Where did this sample come from?"

"From the uncharted caverns at the far end of Tunnel Six. I was down there yesterday and found it on the floor. I guess it had fallen from the ceiling."

Stewart replaced the crystal on the turntable and started it revolving again.

The second sounding of that voice was madness! It carried a thousand mental reverberations that seemed to repeat themselves over and over in the brain. Hypnotic, an unseen Lorelei, it robbed the will, rendered the body powerless to act. I felt as if I could listen to it forever, and yet I knew, I realized that it was slowly devouring my brain!

With an effort Stewart switched off the receiver and faced us.

"Gentlemen," he said. "I think Jimmy has found something! I think he's found the living proof of the one-time existence of Lodana!"

Now I'm quite aware that the word "Lodana" may mean nothing to you. But mention it to any Colonial on this Sixth Moon of Jupiter, and he'll give you a quick look and glance over his shoulder to see if you were overheard.

Lodana was the religion of the Mutants, a devil worship, a fetish to a legendary Lilith who was said to have once ruled over the lost race of the caverns. The most stringent restrictions on the part of the Colonials had failed to suppress it. Here at BeTaba we tolerated the noonday quarter-hour of supplication and the various hysterical "seiz-

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ures" that came over one or more of the Mutants during working time.

The Mutants themselves were a queer offshoot of the normal Sixtian race, a wafer-headed undersized group of creatures, low in the intelligence scale. For the first twenty-five years of their lives their physical strength was prodigious, but after that they rapidly declined until death came at thirty or even earlier.

But now Stewart had said Lodana was an actuality. We had heard her voice. Did the Mutants have the ability to hear sounds from a supersonic register without the aid of receiving apparatus? And if so, did that feminine voice have the same effect on them that it did on us?

One thing was certain. If the Mutants became aware of the existence of this particular crystal, there would be the devil to pay. They were fanatical enough over their religion now.

Stewart took action at once. He closed off the remote caverns of Tunnel Six to the Mutant laborers. He ordered Jimmy Dumont to test samples of all shipments that left the mine. And he caught the next mail ship for Trolontis to report the discovery to Company headquarters.

While he was gone, the Kid continued to explore Tunnel Six. With the aid of Fleming and myself he slung a catwalk across a narrower part of the tunnel dome. But he found no more "voice" crystals, and it was easy to see he was losing interest in his latest hobby.

STEWART returned in good spirits. He brought me a box of Venusian cheroots, the Kid a novelty house catalogue, and all of us some good news. The Sixtian Government had finally recognized the incapacity of the Mutants during the latter part of their tragically short lives and had voted them an assistance benefit, to be paid after the age of twenty-five, or, on their death, to their heirs.

It meant that the Mutants would finally be appeased. It meant that the greatest part of our "native trouble" at the mine was over.

That's what we thought! What we didn't realize was that at this very moment we were sitting on a powder keg with a short fuse.

The new catalogue which Stewart had brought started the Kid off again. In its pages he found the advertisement for what was called a "fortune finder," and at once he proceeded to borrow the necessary money from Fleming and me and send for it.

Meanwhile Stewart made no further mention of the voice in the crystal. Apparently satisfied that the assistance benefit was an answer to all of our troubles at the mine, he buried himself deeper in his books. And that was odd, because ordinarily he was the sort who wouldn't pass up a chance for a scientific explanation to a puzzle like this.

Instead, he read Bellair's "The Problem of the Misfits," Connell's "Perfection: A State of Being," and even that much criticized Martian work, Hom Vala's "The Utopian Race."

It was Fleming who put it into words.

"Things are too blame quiet here," he said. "There hasn't been a Mutant revolt in a month, and for a week now none of the devils has tried to kill me."

The mail ship brought the Kid's "fortune finder." A simple device, it consisted of a falex coil in the end of a long metal staff, the bottom of which was fitted with a hypersensitive arelium cap. About the only thing it could do was indicate deposits of metal beneath the surface. The enclosed direction-sheet stated that it would reveal without fail any hidden cache to a depth of twelve feet.

Jimmy Dumont lugged the thing down into Tunnel Six. Hours passed, and he didn't come back. When we didn't hear any word of him by eight o'clock, Holmes sent Fleming down to see what had happened to him. But Fleming didn't return either.

From here on I hope I may be pardoned for any lapse in the continuity of this narrative. Things happened fast and horribly.

We found Jimmy Dumont and Fleming lying side by side at the farther reaches of Tunnel Six. A first glance at the widening pool of blood and the long hooked *kalza* knife lying in the center of it sent a wave of horror through me. A Mutant had ripped open Fleming's space suit, and he had died almost instantly. Miraculously, the Kid had escaped death by shutting off the upper compartment of his suit after it, too, had been pierced. But there was an ugly stab wound in his thigh.

The thing that made us stand and stare, however, was the yawning hole at the Kid's feet. He must have been digging for hours after his "fortune finder" had indicated a "find." Approximately six feet beneath the surface was revealed the upper half of a roofless shrine containing an upraised dais, an image, and a supplication platform. And

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unmistakably it was pure Upper Caste Sixtian work, a shrine of that lost race.

Even the stark tragedy of Fleming's death was offset for a moment by the significance of this discovery. For as Stewart said, the image was the image of Lodana.

There was tenseness and anticipation and depression that night in Central Quarters. We had little difficulty in piecing together the details of the tragedy. The Mutants had disobeyed orders and gone into Tunnel Six. There they had surprised the Kid and Fleming in the act of clearing away the buried shrine. And, aroused by what they deemed defilement of their fetish, they had sought to murder the two Sounds Ltd. men.

"There's no telling what will happen now," Stewart said. "The teachings of Lodana, you know, are that the future life is a more glorious one than the present, that one should not hesitate for an instant to end this existence, should the reason present itself. If we aren't careful, news of this will spread to the cities—to Trolontis, Parcea, and New Chicago." He closed his eyes wearily. "Philosophically speaking," he said, "it's too bad this mine isn't located on Io or Ganymede."

Holmes looked across at him. "What do you mean?"

"There are no Mutants on those moons," Stewart replied. "There the races are pure."

WE BURIED Fleming next day. We posted double guards on the Mutants. We electrically wired their barracks so that they could be stunned into inactivity on a moment's notice. But when it came to closing off Tunnel Six, Stewart argued against it.

"I say clear away the shrine and let the Mutant laborers visit it whenever they want to," he said. "When they see we're making no move to interfere with their religion, I think all trouble will stop."

Holmes finally agreed. Then we all went down into Tunnel Six to take another look at that image.

The electric lift took us down five levels. The four of us got into a tracto car and a moment later were speeding over a floor as smooth as a pavement. The place was an enormous labyrinth. Subsidiary tunnels and caverns branched everywhere in a hopeless maze.

High above by the blue crystal dome great flocks of Ularlees—*pseidemactata*—circled endlessly, their weazened human-like faces peering down at us in open resentment at our intrusion. It has always been a matter of wonder to me how these creatures can exist in these caverns with only the scant mosses for subsistence.

Stretching a hundred feet down the central cavern was the fossil of a Penthisaur, the twin-head slug of this Sixth Moon's Upper Mezozoic.

But it was the walls of the cavern that held one's gaze. Protruding from their surfaces were hundreds of optic stones, half-organic, half-inorganic "growths" that were like human eyes mounted on three-inch stems. The lavender pupils of those eyes watched us as we passed, and the stems nodded and rustled a strange whispering.

We came at length to Jimmy Dumont's shrine. The entire structure was scarcely more than ten feet across, but the image of Lodana was life-size—a woman clad in a loose-flowing robe with her hair streaming down her back. And it was at once beautiful and horrible.

Stewart was already giving voice to his plan.

"We can rope off all but this section of the cavern," he said. "We can let a few of the Mutants in at a time and see how they react to it."

Holmes nodded. All of us, I think, felt something there. It was a feeling akin to the one we had experienced when we first heard the woman's voice released from the crystal. As if some alien entity were struggling to enter and devour our minds.

The first group of Mutants was permitted to enter Tunnel Six and visit the shrine the next day. Curiously, there was no disorder. The Mutant's eyes grew large as they sighted the image. They immediately threw themselves down in supplication and mumbled their queer incantations.

The following day another group entered the cavern. And thus the daily pilgrimage became a ritual to be watched and endured. But the quiet was a false one. A weird tenseness hung like a pall over the mine.

Meanwhile the monthly mail ship, our only means of communication with the rest of the planet, was overdue. Day after day passed without a sign of it. But when it came, it brought a bombshell!

All over this Sixth Moon, Mutants were committing suicide on a mass scale. Seventy had been found in Trolontis. A hundred more were dead in Parcea. So far, the death plague

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had missed New Chicago, but Colonial officials there reported the native quarter in a state of great unrest.

Holmes swore when he heard this news. "I told you we should have destroyed that shrine," he said. "Those devils won't be content with killing themselves off soon. They'll turn on the Earthmen next."

Stewart shook his head. "It must be only coincidence," he said. "There's been no communication between the cities and the mine. And only the Mutant laborers here know of the existence of the shrine."

For answer Holmes walked over to a cabinet and took down a fulmination rod. He threw its switch, set its little dial and handed it to Stewart.

"I want that shrine destroyed, and I want it destroyed immediately," he said. "Take this down to Tunnel Six and see that it's discharged."

After Stewart had gone, Holmes, the Kid and I sat in Central Quarters, each trying to appear at ease. Only Jimmy succeeded. He was fiddling with a special non-magnetic visi set which the mail ship had brought him. And suddenly as we sat there he got the thing to working.

It didn't occur to me for a minute or two that he was doing something which no Company man had been able to do yet—pick up broadcasts from the cities from this side of the magnetic band. There was no image on the screen, but the announcer's voice sounded clearly:

"—continuing with our noon-day report from Trolontis. For more than twelve hours there have been no further suicides reported among the Mutant population of this city. However, all streets of the Mutant quarter were deserted today, and it was understood a mass meeting is being held in their underground galleries."

THE KID turned a dial, and the voice faded. From his place in the opposite chair Holmes was watching him quietly, a rising gleam of interest in his eyes. Came the singing whine of the magnetic band hum, and then another announcer's voice sounded, speaking fast and excitedly.

"This is Parcea, sending a general emergency call. Mutants here are in an open state of revolt. Sixteen Colonial officials have been murdered this morning, and at this moment a mob five hundred strong is advancing on Government House."

Holmes lurched to his feet. "Where is that cursed Stewart?" he growled. "He should be back by now and—" Hand on the latch bar of the air-lock, he sudenly stiffened. "It's locked," he said slowly. "From the outside."

Together we exerted all our strength on the mechanism, but it was useless. The air-lock was equipped with an emergency latch bar on the outside of the cuddy, but it was hidden in a secret niche, and no Mutant could possibly have found it. Or could they?

And then as we stood there, we heard it. Soft and far away at first, but steadily growing louder and clearer, a woman's voice sounded through the narrow confines of Central Quarters. It was a voice soft and enticing. Lodana!

The honeyed sound vibrated against our ears, reverberated back and forth across the room in a thousand echoes. Holmes clapped his hands to his head and fell to the floor. Even as he did, I felt that voice enter my brain like a bulbous thing alive, writhe and twist its way deeper and deeper with the relentless power of an auger.

It was devouring my brain!

Jimmy Dumont swung about frantically.

"The refuse tube!" he cried. "I may be able to squeeze through it."

Somehow we stumbled to the galley. The voice of madness followed us, seemed to be even louder in this small chamber where our food was prepared. I looked at the refuse tube in despair. It didn't seem possible a man could force his body through so small an opening. But the Kid started working frantically to remove the inner grate. As he struggled, the room seemed to swirl about me. Spots and queer colored lights formed in my vision. My brain was on fire!

Then there was the sudden *plop* as the hermetic cover banged into place. Jimmy Dumont was gone.

An instant later the Kid opened the air-lock door, and Holmes and I stumbled outside. Away from that hideous sound we quickly revived.

Without a word the three of us now made for Tunnel Six as one man. Holmes had a heat pistol in his hand, and the Kid had picked up a flat piece of rock. I think each of us knew our quarry now, but the real truth was filtering into us slowly.

The descent down the lift to the lower level seemed endless. Then we were pacing three abreast down the floor of the cavern. No tracto car was in sight.

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The shrine with its life-size image of Lodana came into sight, but there was no sign of anyone near it. We crossed the intervening space warily, Holmes slightly in the lead. Then when we were ten feet away a voice suddenly broke the silence.

"Stop!"

Stewart, the Philosopher, stood there, one arm upraised over his head, poising the fulmination rod. There was a mad glitter in the man's eyes. His face was flushed, his hair clawed in wild disarray.

"Stop," he said again. "This is as far as you go. If you move a step farther, I throw this rod, and I think you know what that means. Holmes, I see you've guessed the truth, but in your usual clumsy way, probably only half the truth."

"You're mad!" Holmes said.

Stewart shrugged. "Perhaps. Madness is only a relative state. The important thing right now is that a new group of Mutants will be entering this cavern in a few minutes. Not our Mutant laborers, Holmes. I dismissed them weeks ago after I discovered an old lost trail across the magnetic band. Each day you saw Mutants visit the shrine. Those Mutants were from Parcea, Trolontis, New Chicago, the cities to which they could return and spread the news of the latest developments of their religion.

"Perhaps you're not completely acquainted with the teachings of Lodana. It is an admirable philosophy, Holmes. Lodana teaches self-destruction, and with the Mutants destroyed, the Sixtian race here on this moon could be a pure one. I'm a perfectionist, and a perfectionist can't stand degeneracy."

To the rear a sudden muttering began to fill the cavern. A crowd of a hundred or more Mutant laborers were advancing slowly on the image.

EXACTLY what happened after that I cannot be sure. At my side the Kid suddenly took aim and let fly the flat rock he had been holding. The missile struck Stewart on the wrist. He gave a cry of pain, and the fulmination rod clattered to the floor. In an instant he had dived to regain it, but Holmes pumped out two shots from his heat pistol.

Twin blazing white lances of fire struck with a double roar, missing Stewart by inches. He was up again like a released spring, running for the rear of the cavern. The Kid was about to rush forward, but Holmes yanked him back.

"Look out! The rod!"

A roar of a thousand thunders trembled the walls of the cavern. A cloud of smoke, dust, and debris billowed upward, blanketing the scene, and a sheet of greenish fire shot outward like a clutching hand.

When it had cleared, we saw what had happened. Of the shrine and the image of Lodana there was no sign. Fragments of metal and masonry were scattered over a wide area. Farther back, where the fulmination rod had spent the greater part of its explosive force, lay Stewart. His right arm was still extended as if he were in the act of reaching out for something. He was dead. . . .

A long time later Holmes lit his pipe in Central Quarters in the cuddy and attempted to explain.

"There's still a lot I don't understand," he said slowly. "The workings of the human brain are difficult to explain, and when a man like Stewart is involved, you can't always put everything into its proper slot like a picture puzzle.

"Stewart called himself a perfectionist. He would have liked to have had us believe that he instituted that wave of mass suicides among the Mutants because he wanted a pure race here on this moon. In reality he was an egoist and an opportunist. He saw at once what the rest of us did not see—that the lost race of the caverns had been much more advanced than we had originally thought. They had provided for the elimination of the Mutants—which must have been a problem even then—by preserving the voice of their fetish in a supersonic register at a very high pitch.

"Now it is well-known that super or ultrasonic vibrations under certain conditions have a harmful effect on the human organisms. Vibrations of a sufficiently high cycle rate will disintegrate the marrow of the bones and will injure the brain. The Mutants, however, had hypersensitive auditory nerves. In their ears the sound of the voice of Lodana had a strange effect. It produced a powerful sense of depression climaxed by a desire, an overwhelming desire, to destroy themselves.

"You will remember that the Government recently voted the Mutants an assistance benefit. Immediately after Jimmy discovered the voice in the crystal Stewart went to Trolontis, ostensibly to report the discovery to Company headquarters. Instead, he made

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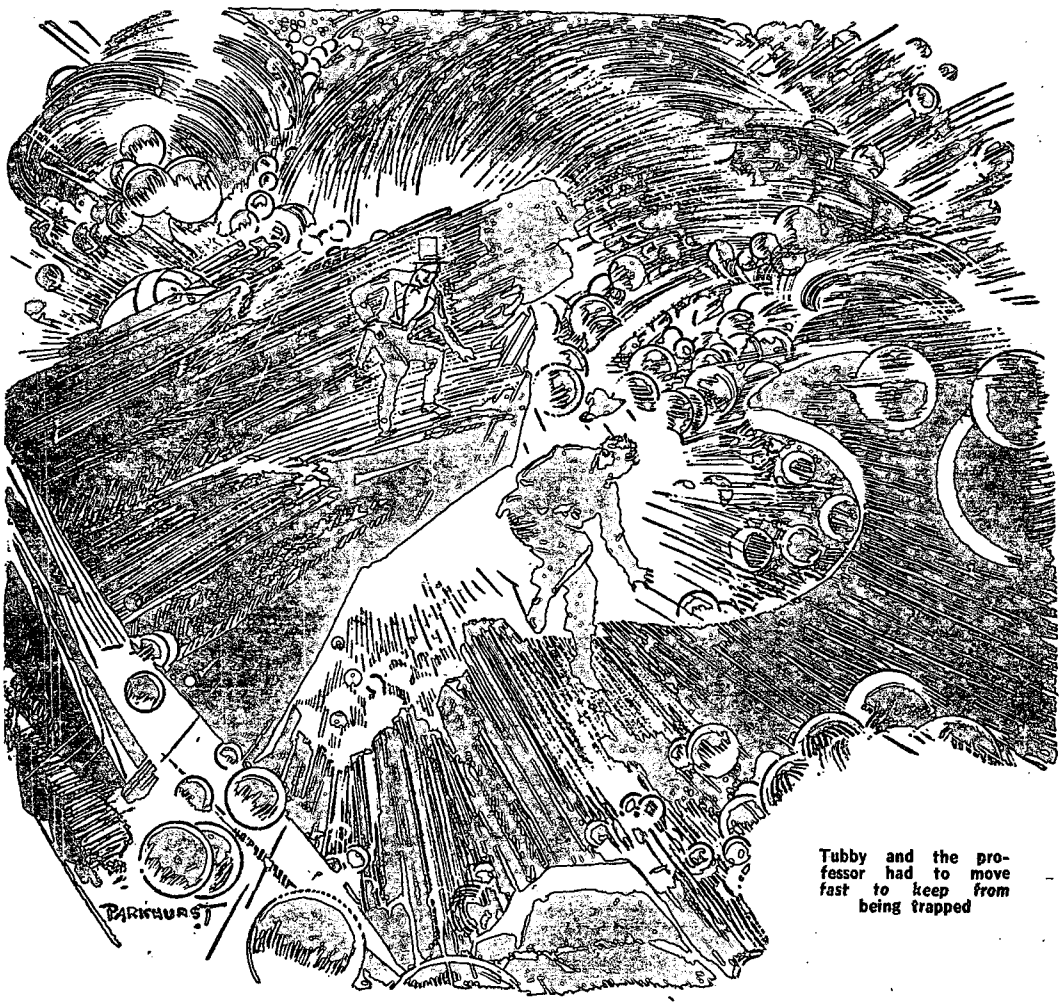

Tubby and the professor had to move fast to keep from being trapped

UP AND ATOM

By RAY CUMMINGS

Dauntless Tubby and gaunt Professor Pluton learn it's a small world after all when they combat a big menace!

TUBBY and his two friends were late arriving at the lecture. The hall was already jam packed.

"Come on, shove right in," Tubby said. "We gotta get seats."

On the flag-draped platform, a fat woman was singing the "Star Spangled Banner." Everybody was standing.

"Bombs bursting in air!" the fat woman was singing.

Tubby chuckled. "Neat touch." It was a nice idea to sing that song at the start of this lecture on "Democracy's Defender—the Atomic Bomb."

Tubby had good luck. The ushers were bringing out some little folding chairs to take care of the overflow. Tubby, Jake and Pete obtained seats at one side, in front near a little group of the important local people who had arranged the lecture.

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When the "Star Spangled Banner," was finished, the fat woman bowed graciously. She evidently was somebody important in the town, because all the ushers came running forward with flowers. She carried all that she could, and the ushers brought the rest and piled them around her when she took her seat. It happened to be right in front of Tubby.

With an empty seat there, Tubby's view had been fine. Everything was different now. With all the big floral pieces crowded around her, he could still see the platform a little, but it was like looking through a forest of big leaves and blossoms.

"'S an outrage!" he mumbled audibly.

"Shut up!" Jake hissed. "The lecture's gonna begin."

The lecturer was a tall, skinny young man, very pale faced, with a dark forelock. He was dressed in black clothes.

He began to talk. Interesting stuff, this atomic bomb business. Tubby settled himself more comfortably and stared through the forest of flowers.

"Before I deal with the atomic bomb itself," the lecturer was saying, "and explain the general nature of atomic fission, and our modern scientific development of it into the atomic bomb, I am going to take you figuratively speaking, into an atom itself and let you look around. Let us picture the interior of an atom—its structure, which in a way, you might liken to our starry universe itself." Deep stuff this!

THE lecturer droned on. Now he was tossing Uranium 235 and Plutonium 238 and electrons and slow-moving neutrons around just as though they were nothing unusual. The lecture hall was hot and there wasn't very much air, but Tubby didn't mind. Anybody with a good keen brain gets a real thrill delving into deep stuff. Suddenly he felt his sleeve being twitched.

"Quit it, Jake," he mumbled. "I'm listenin'."

But it wasn't Jake. It was his left sleeve, beyond which there was a dim little open space at the side of the hall. The twitch came again.

"Oh, Tubby—Tubby!" an urgent voice murmured, "I'm so glad I found you!"

Tubby turned around. A little man in a big plug hat was standing close beside him. He was dressed all in black, and he was so shriveled his clothes hung on him in folds.

"Tubby!" he said again. "You are Tubby, I know. It's a matter of life or death!"

"Whose death?" Tubby murmured. It certainly sounded important.

"The people of New York City," the little man said. "Thousands! They're doomed to die if we don't stop it!" He had Tubby on his feet now, and was shoving him through the side exit. "I just found it out a little while ago, and I knew you were the man to help me."

They were out on the dark, tree-lined side street now, and the stranger was hurrying Tubby along. They were going so fast that both of them were panting. With the deaths of millions of people in sight, that was natural.

"Maybe you better tell me who you are and what we're gettin' into," Tubby said.

"I'm Professon Pluton," the little man said. "I'm a physicist. In fact, you might say, I'm the most important physicist in the world."

"Pleased to meet you, Professor," Tubby said.

"All my life," the professor went on, "I've delved into the mysteries of the atom—the problem of atomic fission. You could say, indeed, that *I* was the one who solved it."

"Atomic fission's deep stuff," Tubby said.

"It is indeed," the professor agreed. "But *I* mastered it. My co-workers call me the original Atom Boy because I worked on the atom bomb."

With a life and death crisis right ahead of them, Tubby decided to get down to the meat of the thing.

"But you said a million people are gonna get killed," he said. "What's gonna kill them, and what do we do to stop it?"

The answer was simple. A villainous co-worker of Professor Pluton—one Dr. Stress Tork, another professor, had stolen an atom bomb of the most horrible, murderous type, all complete, with firing mechanism all set ready to go! Worse than that, this Tork had a new-type, one man control bombing plane.

"I found it out just a little while ago," Professor Pluton was saying. "He's got it on his secret takeoff ramp and he's going to—to drop that bomb on New York City. New York City, with its teeming millions! Think of it, Tubby! An atom bomb of the worst type!"

Tubby realized this Tork guy was pretty mean.

"Worse than that, Tubby," the professor

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said. "He expects to conquer the world and then become the Supreme World Dictator."

"Sure has got big ideas," Tubby commented. "Is his place far from here?"

They had now reached the edge of town. The professor gestured toward a nearby, dark wooded hillside.

"It's on the further side of that hill," he said.

"That makes it easy, Perfessor," Tubby said. "We'll go right at him now and beat his brains out. He's only one, and we're two."

But the problem wasn't that simple. It seemed that Tork was a suspicious fellow. His place here on the dark hillside was surrounded by a high, electrified fence. And inside that there were photoelectric cell beams—the electric eye—behind which Tork had a whole arsenal of weapons.

It was enough to give anybody pause, even Tubby.

"So what do we do?" Tubby demanded. "I don't want to walk into no electric fence."

But the professor had thought it all out carefully. "We'll get in," he said. His hand touched the bulging pocket of his long black coat. "I've brought equipment from my laboratory."

AHEAD of them Tubby saw a big, twenty-foot-high electric fence. There was a tiny light in a dark building behind the fence, and Tubby could dimly see what looked like a distant takeoff ramp, with a plane standing there.

"Good enough!" the professor whispered. "He's still got the bomb in his laboratory. We're just in time."

To Tubby, things looked hopeless. "But we can't get over that fence, Perfessor."

"So we'll go under it!" the professor whispered triumphantly. "See that little six-inch space under the bottom wire? We'll walk in under there. And we'll be so small, we'll avoid setting off his alarm systems."

The professor seemed suddenly to have gone off his mental beam. But he hadn't.

"It's one of my biggest inventions, Tubby," he explained. "I've got a drug, a drug so powerful that it shrinks every tiny cell in our bodies, yet preserves their shape."

A sort of anti-growth drug. "We get small," Tubby said. Then a nasty thought occurred to him. "So far, so good, Perfessor. But how do we get large again? I don't always want to be small."

They were now crouching close to the electrified fence. From one of his pockets the professor produced two smallish vials.

"Naturally, I thought of that," he said. "The second drug, to make us large again, wasn't hard to develop. It's merely the direct antithesis of the other." He opened one of the corked vials, and took out two tiny pellets of the drug. His thin fingers were shaking with excitement as he handed one to Tubby.

"Roger," Tubby said. He put the pellet on his tongue. It was certainly powerful stuff. It made Tubby's head reel. When the world steadied again another startling thought occurred to him. "Hey, Perfessor! What about our clothes while we're gettin' so small?"

"At ease, Tubby. I've tested all that. The drug affects anything which is within the magnetic field it sets up around us. Our clothes will dwindle the same as we do." The little professor laughed unsteadily. "Stand up, Tubby, and look around you."

Tubby obeyed. There certainly was a lot going on in the world. Everything was in motion, dwindling in size, getting steadily smaller, with a creeping crawling movement. The electric fence was already not much taller than Tubby. And it seemed to be crowding closer. He could almost reach out and touch it now.

Something was wrong here! The pills were working on the landscape, not on Tubby and his companion! The professor wasn't changing size.

"Hey!" Tubby gasped. "What's goin' on here? It's that fence that's changin', not us."

"Not at all," the professor mumbled. "That fence is getting smaller because we're getting larger, expanding in size— Oh, dear! Oh my goodness!"

The poor little professor now realized exactly what was happening. Something was indeed very wrong. He and Tubby had planned to dwindle in size, but they were getting bigger very rapidly. The fence already wasn't much higher than Tubby's waist. In another minute he'd be able to step over it easily.

"Oh my goodness gracious!" the professor was gasping. "I gave us the wrong drug! I gave us the one to make us large! Oh, dear! However did I make that mistake?"

So what? Tubby gripped him.

"Listen, Perfessor," Tubby said swiftly. "Everything's swell. We'll jump the fence and grab that little midget."

"We don't dare," the professor gasped.

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"We're so big he'll discover us any second now! And he's got big elephant guns, and artillery too."

Even a giant can be killed with a cannon. The professor was right. It was certainly too long a chance to take. The professor had the vial of the other drug out of his pocket now. Hastily he and Tubby took a double dose. Everything went haywire again.

When things steadied, Tubby saw that the fence and the house had expanded. The fence looked monstrous, thirty or forty feet high.

EVERYTHING kept getting bigger and bigger and further away. There was already quite a lot of jagged, rough ground between them and the fence.

"Oh, dear!" the professor gasped again. "We've got to run, Tubby. We're getting small so fast."

The ground was expanding so quickly that it was quite a distance to the fence. When they got there, the monstrous wire cables of the fence loomed above them, the bottom cable now not much higher than Tubby's head.

"Perfect!" the professor exulted. "We're just about down to six inches high."

They didn't have to duck. The expanding cable continued rising up. They ran under it and across a dark stretch of tumbled ground where a monstrous house loomed up.

"That's the open doorway!" Professor Pluton panted. "Oh, dear, I guess we took too much of the drug! We're getting small so fast. Keep running."

The drug, fortunately, was slowing up, or they would never have made it. They climbed desperately over rocks and boulders, and twigs that now were like big fallen trees on the expanding ground. Then, at last things remained about the same size.

"We're about two inches tall," the professor whispered. "Here we are at the doorway."

The wooden floor was jagged with monstrous splinters, and it was pitted with yellowish holes, crevices and tiny gullies. Overhead the light was a great blurred area of yellow radiance.

The professor gripped Tubby's arm. "There he is. Look! He's adjusting the bomb now."

The bomb was maybe fifty or a hundred feet from them—a huge gleaming cylinder towering into the air. Beside it a great blurred moving thing loomed up, with monstrous trousers and feet that seemed twenty or thirty feet long.

"There he is!" Professor Pluton murmured in awe. "Come on, Tubby. He won't notice us."

That much seemed pretty certain.

"But where we goin', Perfessor?" Tubby demanded. Surely they couldn't very well attack this two-hundred-foot giant.

"I'll show you," the professor said. "Trust me, Tubby. I've got everything planned." He chuckled. "We're walking right under the beams of his photoelectric cells now. His alarm systems are useless. We won't set them off, being so small."

But the murderous Tork was evidently a very thorough fellow. Even two inches of height wasn't enough to avoid his intricate scientific safeguards. Suddenly pandemonium broke loose. Great patches of light were flashing in the air overhead and bells were clanging wildly. And the canalboats of Tork's feet were swooping around.

"Duck and run!" Tubby gasped.

They could have been mashed by one of those canalboats, so they crouched down behind an empty cigarette package and hoped for the best.

Luckily, Tork didn't discover them. The villain evidently decided that it was a false alarm. His swooping feet quieted down and the chaos of lights and clangs subsided.

"All right now," the professor whispered. "Come on."

It was quite a climb up the bulging side of that blimp-bomb. Fortunately there were projections and ramps, but even so Tubby and the professor were about exhausted before they got through climbing.

"Here it is," the professor said. It was a wide, dark open space into the side of the bomb. Like a tunnel-entrance it seemed, though, as the professor explained, it was really only a little lateral opening a couple of inches wide. Like human mice they scampered into it. Then Tubby stopped.

"But where we goin'?" Tubby protested.

"We're in the firing mechanism of the bomb, Tubby," Professor Pluton answered. "That's what you might call the trigger, over there."

The trigger was a shining diagonal beam maybe a hundred feet long, that sloped off into a space crowded with shining shapes of rectangular shafts and beams, and tubes and grids.

In the firing mechanism of an atomic bomb!

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Somehow it seemed pretty dangerous to Tubby.

"Listen, don't let's do anything wrong, Perfessor!" Tubby warned.

"Of course not," Professor Pluton said. He pulled Tubby forward. "I've built thousands of these bombs. That's the atomic charge, over there."

THE heart of the bomb! The little chunk of substance which would split apart, by that miracle of nature called atomic fission. It was a jagged slab of shining stuff, clamped into all the intricate beams and shafts and cables which were suspended here.

Tubby was awed.

"That's Plutonium Two-thirty-eight," the professor murmured. "We're going to take more of the drug—a lot more of it. In fact, we're going into that Plutonium. Into one of its atoms."

Right into the center of things, so to speak.

The professor glanced at his watch. "We've got to hurry, Tubby. Tork is going to drop the bomb at midnight, and it's now nine-thirty-five."

It seemed quite an assignment. No wonder they had to hurry. "And what do we do when we get in the atom?" Tubby demanded.

"I'll tell you, all in good time," the professor panted as Tubby boosted him up onto the slab of Plutonium. "I've got it all planned."

Tubby certainly hoped so. They stood on the shining slab, with a glowing abyss all around them. The professor was fumbling in his pocket.

"Now we'll take more of the dwindling drug," he said. "A lot more. Oh, dear, where did I put those vials?" He produced them, but his hands were shaking so much with eagerness that he dropped them onto the Plutonium ground.

"Take it easy," Tubby warned. "And don't get 'em mixed this time, Perfessor, We wouldn't want to get big in here. Might bust somethin'."

"Yes, yes. I'll be careful."

They each took three of the pills this time —the right drug, evidently, because Tubby could see the Plutonium on which they stood, expanding rapidly.

It was startling. Everywhere shining pits were opening up, enlarging into ravines, then into valleys.

"Come on, Tubby," the professor said, "We got to climb down."

They tried to run down a long ramp strewn with loose glowing boulders, but they fell, and it was a long slide. Soon they were up, and running on a shining desert where the sky overhead glowed with a dazzling light. For an hour they were busy descending into one abyss after another.

At last it seemed that they had again reached equilibrium. The shining desert had stopped expanding.

"Okay," Tubby said. "I'm glad that's over. So here we are in the atom, Perfessor. Now what?"

"The atom?" The professor shook his head. "Dear me. Why, we haven't even gotten small enough to be down to the molecules yet. Though I do think the molecules seem to be taking shape. See that blurred roundness out there at the horizon?"

Across maybe a thousand miles of the glowing desert there were vague roundish shining blurs off in the sky.

"That's where we go?" Tubby demanded. "Well, we won't never make it, not in forty years. Not unless we fly."

"And that's just what we're going to do," Professor Pluton cried. "That's where my atom-flyer comes in. It's my own invention, and now the time has come to use it."

From his bulging pocket he produced a little white-metal cage about the size of a lump of sugar. Carefully he placed it on the ground at their feet.

"There it is. Now we'll get into it, Tubby."

"By gettin' small, and leavin' it stay the size it is," Tubby said. He understood matters now. They barely touched a pellet of the dwindling drug to their tongues. The cage expanded, they darted inside and the professor slid the door-grating closed.

"Now the drug's magnetic-field aura around us will dwindle the flyer with us," Professor Pluton said. "Here we go, Tubby."

It was a cage room about twenty feet square now. Off to one side there were two chairs with a bank of intricate controls before them.

"My space-flying controls," the professor explained. "I just turn on either intensification or repulsion of gravitational force, and we move in space."

They took a whole slue of the dwindling drug this time, and were off with a rush on the journey. It was quite an adventure, hurtling through space in that glowing, humming cage. The shining desert under them dropped away, as they speeded upward, dwindling and dwindling. Through the cage

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bars Tubby could see depths of space around them. As the dwindling cage hurtled at them, more space opened up.

The professor darted directly toward one great blurred blob. It hung in the glowing sky maybe not more than a thousand miles away.

LIKE an arrow they headed at it, and more realms of space opened up—space with other things swimming and shoving around. The atoms! And then the professor selected one atom and they hurtled at it. The atom expanded in front of them until it filled all the sky.

"We're in the atom now," Professor Pluton said.

It was certainly strange. The whole firmament everywhere consisted of silent fireworks, moving slowly in great glowing circles like the earth going around the sun.

"Electrons, neutrons!" the professor was murmuring with awe.

But everything was moving so slowly! Tubby mentioned it.

"That's because time has changed as well as our size," the professor explained. "All this is only a fraction of a second now, compared to what time was to us when we started the trip."

"What do we do now, Perfessor?" Tubby demanded.

That brought the little professor into alertness. "Eh? Oh, the purpose of our trip, Tubby." He fumbled into his big pocket again. "We come now to my greatest invention," he said.

The little gadget he produced looked sort of like a cannon with a grid across its muzzle. It was about six inches long, with a lot of wires fastened to it.

"With this," Professor Pluton said, "I'm going to introduce into this atom a slow-moving neutroid. A *neutroid*, you understand. Not a neutron, as in ordinary atomic fission. The neutroid is my own development."

As he set up the little cannon to fire through the bars of the cage, Tubby had an alarming thought.

"You're gonna make atomic fission break out here, Perfessor? Take it easy! We gotta get away before things blow up!"

"Of course, Tubby. But you see, time is very different here." Before Tubby could stop him, he fired the gadget. From the grid-muzzle a tiny radiant smoke-ring puffed out and floated off into space.

"There it goes, my neutroid," the professor murmured. "It will bring on a new type of atomic fission. Something so very different."

But atomic fission is atomic fission, and here they were at the very nub of it, so to speak. Tubby let out a yell. But the smiling professor wasn't disturbed.

"Don't be silly, Tubby. The explosion won't come for some ten years yet, by the Atomic Time in which we are now living."

Deep stuff. But it reminded Tubby that they were actually inside the atomic bomb, and that Tork was going to explode it in his own diabolical fashion, at midnight.

"Hey Perfessor," Tubby said. "Remember that guy Tork? What time is it now?"

The professor produced his watch, took a look.

"Oh, dear!" he moaned. "Oh, my goodness!"

"What's up now?" Tubby demanded.

"I forgot to wind my watch this morning! It stopped at ten o'clock tonight, while we were coming in here."

And what time was it now? It could be nearly midnight already!

"Jumpin' jingoes!" Tubby yelped. "We gotta get out of here in a hurry."

That was obvious. With trembling hands, the professor produced the vials of the drugs.

"No! That's the wrong one!"

He flung away the nearly empty vial. Then he dropped the other one on the floor. Tubby picked it up.

"Okay, don't get scared, Perfessor."

Panic was too dangerous. They could so easily do something wrong! Tubby helped the professor get out the little pellets of the expanding drug and they each swallowed a handful.

It was quite a trip back. A real rush, you might say, with the shining, fireworks interior of the atom dwindling, closing in on them with dizzying swoops. Then the molecules were outside, shrinking and crowding together as the humming, expanding cage hurtled outward and upward. The handful-dose of the expanding drug had nearly worn off by the time they had landed on the Plutonium desert.

They abandoned the atom-flyer and took another big drug-dose. Standing on the shrinking Plutonium rocks, Tubby saw the little cage dwindle and vanish at their feet. They had to be quick, climbing up out of ravines, before they closed in. Once the pro-

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fessor nearly got his legs caught, but Tubby hauled him clear.

AT LAST they were standing breathless on the upper surface of the little Plutonium slab. It was about twenty feet across. Then ten. Then five.

"Come on," Tubby panted.—"Jump down!"

They tumbled onto a metal ramp. The drug had nearly worn off again, but Tubby could see that things here in the bomb were all shrinking, closing in.

"Hurry, Perfessor! Don't let's get jammed in here. We'd be all mashed up."

They barely avoided disaster by tumbling out through the little slit on the side of the bomb. They were growing so fast they took a chance and slid, and jumped.

They landed unhurt. There was light here, and a roaring hum. Where were they? For a minute they clutched each other. Nearby Tubby could see the sausage shaped bomb casing. But it wasn't so big now. It got smaller. Soon it was about a twelve foot cylinder, racked here near them.

"Why!" the professor exclaimed. "We're in the bomb-bay of his plane! And we're in the air. Tork's heading for New York now."

Through a port of Tork's new-type one-man bomber, they could see down where, in the night the great city of New York was spread beneath them. So it was now almost midnight. The villainous Tork was ready to drop his bomb. Millions of people in New York would be killed.

There wasn't a second to lose. Fortunately they had reached their normal size again. Tubby leaped to his feet.

"Come on, Perfessor! Up and at him!"

With the little professor scrambling after him, Tubby dashed up the short narrow steps. And there was the villain Tork seated at the bomber's controls. He was a big, brawny man, heavily goggled. His black hair was parted over one ear and plastered down. He looked just like Hitler.

"That's him!" the professor squealed. "He copies Hitler. He admired Hitler!"

The only warning Tork had was the professor's squealing voice. With a jump Tubby was on him.

"Now, you dirty villain!" Tubby roared. "Enough is enough. Murderin' millions is too many."

Tork gave an answering roar, let go of the controls and leaped to meet Tubby. It was quite a fight, man to man stuff, with the professor crouching in a corner. Tork and Tubby fought all over the cabin.

"Hit him, Tubby!" the professor was squealing. "Hit him harder, Tubby!"

It was a good idea, and Tubby was doing his best with it. But Tork could hit, too. The cabin was wrecked. The plane lurched and went out of control. Things were hissing and crackling. The controls were shattered. Wind was sweeping and surging and sucking around. A roaring filled Tubby's ears.

"Hit him, Tubby! Hit him harder!"

"That's what I'm tryin' to do!" Tubby panted.

Then he was gripping Tork and shoving him through an opening. Tork went out on his ear. With a last scream he fell downward, into the abyss of space under the lurching plane.

"Gottcha!" Tubby roared. "There he goes, Perfessor! Dirty villain!"

So far, so good. But there were plenty of other things to think about. The wrecked plane was falling. As Tubby stood panting, gripping the tilted, plunging cabin, he could see a wing break off. And flames were springing up.

"Perfessor! Perfessor! Got to get out of here."

Drunkenly the plane had swooped off sideward. They weren't over New York City now, they seemed to be north of it. The dark green countryside of Westchester was under them. A moon-bleached landscape was coming up fast. In a minute or two they'd crash, bomb and all. They'd have to bail out. Where did Tork keep his parachutes?

Tubby found them. He fitted one on. Then he leaped, counted five, and pulled the ripcord. Above him, the big 'chute ballooned out in a great spread of swaying white. Okay, swell. And then suddenly as he dangled in the air, swaying like a huge pendulum, he found that the professor was clinging to him. The professor had gotten mixed up for he had taken the same 'chute as Tubby. But he didn't weigh much so it didn't make much difference.

"We're safe!" the professor murmured, when he could get his breath. "Very neat, Tubby. You did everything fine. And there goes the plane."

OFF TO ONE side, far below them, the plane bomb and all, was hurtling down with a big trailer of flame above it. A wooded

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hillside was under it.

"My bomb with a slow-moving neutroid in it," the professor murmured. "Now you'll see my greatest invention. The new-type atomic bomb, not diabolic, but benign. Not destructive, but a real boon to mankind. This moment is historic, Tubby. The birth of the New Era of beneficent bombs! And nobody will ever use the old ones again. You wait and see."

They certainly didn't have to wait long. In another second, there was a burst of radiance. It came slowly, and then it glowed and spread. For a moment it was like the soft roselight of a beautiful dawn—and then for a second or two, full daylight. The lovely light of a June day. It glowed and then faded. The chilly starlight and moonlight of the March night closed in again.

"Wasn't that beautiful?" Professor Pluton murmured. "Lovely June warmth."

They could feel the warmth now, coming up at them in gentle perfumed puffs.

"The bomb burst," Tubby said. "Very pretty, Perfessor. And is that all?"

"All? Why, it's only beginning. Down there, for miles around, the radioactivity of the bomb is spreading. But it's not harmful radioactivity. It's beneficial."

He didn't get a chance to say any more, because the ground was coming up under them as the 'chute settled down. They barely missed a tree.

"Watch it, Perfessor!" Tubby warned. But they couldn't do anything. With its double burden the 'chute dropped them pretty hard. Tubby's knees buckled under him and then the ground hit him with a bump. A really nasty bump, so nasty that all Tubby knew after it, was nothing at all.

Then he opened his eyes, to find himself lying on the ground in the moonlit woods with the professor beside him.

"You dead, Perfessor?"

The little professor struggled back into consciousness. He was dazed, but his mind went right back to where it had left off.

"Isn't it wonderful, Tubby? The bomb burst right near here. We're right in the heart of the radioactivity!"

Beneficent radioactivity. A warming nourishment to everything growing here. A new spark of growth, of productiveness. Instead of withering things as it would under the blast of ordinary radioactivity, the vegetation here was springing into supernormal life and growth.

This was a chilly, March night. But the vegetation didn't know it. Buds were opening. Leaves and vines and thickets all around here were stirring with growth, so swift that you could see it. And you could hear it, a million million tiny pops and rustlings.

"Why—why," Tubby murmured. "June is bustin' out all over, ain't it?"

"And the ground for miles is now so fertile," the professor enthused, "that you can grow vegetables ten times as big as they used to be. Nobody will ever be hungry again. Mine is the only kind of atomic bomb anybody will ever use again! This will revolutionize the world! Don't you see that."

But what Tubby saw was a slithering vine coming down off a monstrous growing tree. It came with a rush of growth and suddenly it was seizing Tubby and the little professor. And not just one vine—another came, too.

Abruptly Tubby realized that the overstimulated vegetation was attacking them. Why wouldn't it, boosted like that with radioactivity? It would, and it did! Suddenly there was nothing here but a chaos of lashing vegetable things, struggling and twisting. A vine like an octopus or a python had Tubby by the leg!

"Perfessor! Perfessor!"

But in all the bursting, crunching, slithering chaos, the little professor was whirled away. And now there were struggling flowers here. Giant, monstrous pink and yellow and blue blossoms. They slithered and swayed, with reaching tentacles. The perfume of them was choking, sickening.

And behind them a big American flag was swaying. Tubby tried to fight his way toward it. . . .

"He's all right now, I guess." That seemed to be Jake's voice. Where was the professor? Why was Jake here?

"Yeah, guess so." And that was Pete's voice. "Guess he's comin' to at last. Yeah, sure is. Lookit, he's openin' his eyes."

TUBBY opened his eyes to a white hospital room. One eye, to be exact, because the other was covered with bandages. A lot of him seemed to be covered with bandages, as a matter of fact. But still he could see the white room, and the little white bed in which he was lying, with Jake and Pete bending anxiously over him and a white-clad hospital nurse in the background.

"What—what happened?" Tubby muttered. "Who did this to me?"

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"The ushers at that there atom lecture," Jake said. "You got pretty rough, smashin' things up and battin' them flowers around."

"You sure did," Pete said. "What'd you do? Go off your head or somethin'."

"It was the perfume of them flowers," Tubby mumbled. "Yeah. Yeah, that's what it was."

"Or maybe you fell asleep," Jake suggested. "And had a nightmare. Maybe, eh?"

Tubby didn't bother to answer him. Outside in the hospital corridor, people were tramping past the door.

"What's that goin' on?" Tubby demanded. He felt nearly okay now. He raised up on one elbow, and grinned at the pretty nurse. "What's goin' on around here?"

"Oh, that," the nurse said. "Just a medical lecture, in the auditorium down the hall. If it bothers you, I'll close the door."

"A lecture?" Tubby sat up electrified. Then he jumped out of bed. But standing didn't feel so good. He sat down on the bed again.

"Get me a wheelchair, nurse!" he commanded. "Come on now, make it snappy. What's the lecture about?"

"Just medical stuff," the nurse said. "The Romance of Penicillin, Sulfadiathole and Sulfadiazene, is what it's called."

Tubby beamed. "Swell. That sounds wonderful. Hurry up with that wheelchair, nurse. We don't wanta be late."

He was still beaming through his bandages as the nurse wheeled him down the hospital corridor. Penicillin. Sulfadiathole. Sulfadiazene. Anybody with a good keen brain gets a real thrill delving into deep stuff.

LODANA

(Concluded from page 86)

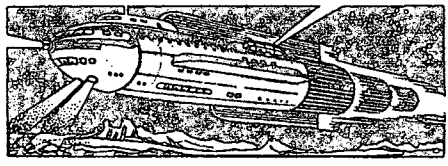
arrangements with the Mutant leaders there to take over some of those assistance benefit policies in return for the promise to let them hear Lodana's voice.

"Previously he had discovered a lost trail across the magnetic band. He secretly dismissed the Mutant laborers here at the mine, bringing in another group from the cities to take their places. He repeated this exchange every few days so that a constant stream of Mutant fanatics, inflamed by the voice of Lodana, could filter back into the cities and thus spread the doctrine of mass suicide.

"The shrine, of course, was the crux of the situation. Stewart knew from his readings that such an object must exist somewhere in the caverns, and he provided the Kid with a means of discovering it by urging him to send for the fortune-finder. As you now know, that shrine contained crude but effective apparatus to broadcast the high frequency vibrations which were molded into the voice of Lodana. The Mutants could hear it, but he couldn't."

"I see," I said. "Then Stewart's real motive was the assistance benefits. Every time a new group visited the shrine, he played on their superstitious fervor and induced them to sign those payable-on-death benefits over to him. But why—"

"Why did they do it?" Holmes puffed his pipe in silence a moment. "Probably because he told them they would receive Lodana's favor for the trip to the next world. Thank heavens, we were able to send a report of the image's destruction back to the cities on the Kid's visi set. That should stop the rebellion and the wave of suicides."



THE DEADLY DUST, a Bud Gregory novelet by William Fitzgerald—ATOMIC, a novelet of the future by Henry Kuttner—IN THE CARDS, an amazing novelet by George O. Smith—and many other headliners in the August issue of THRILLING WONDER STORIES—Now on sale, 15c at all stands!

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THE ETHER VIBRATES

(Continued from page 9)

good, and even beats DARK WORLD. And to me is the best he has done for you this year. Al so the best story in SS or TWS this year. Need I say I'll be wating for more.

On the other end of the scale is THE DISC-MEN OF JUPITER. No other story I have read had more of the thing that make stf "hack" than this one. It had almost all the falts ever found with stf stories. It's plot was weak. the science could have been thought up by a 3 year old. And the people were as alive and natural as iron deer.

Can you admagen being cooped up in a little space ship with a good looking girl for months and not falling in love with her? So, why didn't the two jerks get jelous of each other. Now I'm not looking for spice-space-stories in SS. I have enough truble with the covers, but no foo in the system can make me belive that Duvelskoe would give up like that. It sounded like he was a wolf, why so slow.

And what made it all the wose was the fool heroin stoing away. When a fan wants to make a story funny he has the heroin stow away. It has been done sooooo much that it is funny. Like a gag repeted over to many times.

The short-story by Heinlein was very good. Neet old ending there. Fooled me like anything. I figgered he was in N. Mexico. Fearn was readable. Not bad, not good. Rates about 2.5—

Thanks for useing my letter. Was reather supprised to see it so far forward. Some one once asked me how I got my letters printed when I spell so badly. Well to quote a well known Prof. "I don't ask questions. I just have fun."

I agree with Rickey about a super-race. Dear old Homo-sap has worryed about and hoped for one a long time. One wonders what would really happen if some supper men did come along. There have been a lot of stories on it, but they neaver seem to fit to well. First of all I wondder if we would know it.

You know there is the saying about the one-eyed man keeping quiet in the land of the blind. Maybe we already have supper men that are hiding their light under a Bu. basket. After all a lot of amazing (pardon) things have happen. Maybe some Odder Johns are trying to run the world. What do you think Rickey?

So with a nod to frinds Jewett and Alan I leave you tell next month. Miss me.—*2962 Sant Ana St., South Gate, Calif.*

Iron deer, eh? Well, Rick, you've supplied your own answer. Duvelskoe was an iron wolf. Anyway, glad you enjoyed Kuttner and Heinlein. A couple of fine writing boys. As for you cracks anent the "heroin", you can give us a shot right now. Your spelling affects us that way.

Kidding aside, do you do it on purpose? At times it smacks of genius, which is why we run it as is.

WEAKEST LIN
by Lin Carter

Dear Sir: Kuttner's latest effort is his best yet. It even tops *Dark World*, which was pretty hard to do. The rather unique idea of a place where time is stable and space unstable is new to me. Clever. Only one thing I didn't get. Tell me, Beloved Editor, just what was the room full of tapestry and the crystal window? That I didn't get. The pics were awful, too. What happened to Finlay, this ish?

The H of F novelette was one of the worst opuses (hmm—should that have been opusi?) you've printed yet. Downright antique. Flying pancakes yet! Gad.

Thanks so much for giving us a Heinlein story. He's tops, for my money. Fine, but—er—couldn't it have been a little longer?

The Arbiter was mediocre, to say the least. By mediocre, I mean it wasn't good enough to be swell; and it wasn't poor enough to be lousy. Just didn't click with your humble critic.

Now we turn (heh, heh!) to TEV. So the Sarge Saturn nom-de-ploomy is out, eh? Well, I can't see how it will do any harm now. The letters were better than average. William Rose; cleverest poem I've read for many a moon! Bob Granhart: this controversy over Bergey *is* getting somewhat amusing. I admit that he's an excellent artist but his choice of plot and color cheapens his work. Guerry Brown: migawd, another rating system! So much for TEV.—*865 20th Ave. So., St. Petersburg, Florida.*

We'll bite—what did happen to Finlay? Tsk, tsk. The plural of opus is opera, believe it or not. As for flying pancakes—try any Child's Restaurant window. Thanks for defining mediocre. We'd never have guessed.

SNEARY LOVER
by S. Vernon McDaniel

Dear Ed: Just finished May, '47 SS. Many comments thereon. Here they come: Kuttner is beginning to be my Idol! I *love* that man! First DARK WORLD, Then WAY OF THE GODS, and now this! Wonderful Fantasy, I say. Who says Merritt's better? *The highest honors to* LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE.

The other stories in this aforementioned ish were merely mediocre. DISC-MEN fair. COLUMBUS all right, and the ARBITER fooey!

Sneary, I love you. The best letter I have seen for eons. Your spelling enhanced rather than detracted from its beauty. May Ghu praise you! May he praise you, too, Ed, for printing more letters per TEV. I'd have died if I knew you refused to print a letter like Robyn Le Roy's. That next to last sentence of his slayed me. He can send me that "filosofē" any time.

All these dates forming an aura over Rex. E. Ward's letter have me in a dither. TWS celebrated its 10th anniversary in 1939, so why not a 20th for 1949? (You stated the former yourself in the ETERNAL NOW issue of Fall, 1944).

Open note to Wm. E. Rose. . .

Kiwi Rose is in the dirk,
He knows not how we Fans wirk.
O! if on your covers we could smirk,
In ecstasy
would we be
So to this pome, you must hirk!
No egobo do we shirk
Why? Because, jerk, *We're* not beserk!

That should hold any one of the new outcropping of sadists.—*1010 Garcia Road, Santa Barbara, California.*

I guess we'd take a lot from him
Who uses "slayed" for slew!

WASSOMATTER?
by J. Wasso Jr.

Dear Ed: How about "jerk" to rhyme with "smirk" in re Mr. Rose in the May issue?

Those minor masterpieces of Kuttner's are becoming a habit . . . where can I contact him?—*119 Jackson Avenue, Pen Argyl, Pennsylvania.*

If you'll promise not to use "contact" as a verb again you might try the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society at the 637½ South Bixel Street address. Kuttner just moved back to that region last April after a long stay in the East.

FOR SHAME!
by Captain K. F. Slater

Dear Ed: The reason for this missive is B)B)B) Bergey. . . . .

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So what he ain't no Steinbeck!!! He can read, can't he? The cover, May 1947 illustrates, we are told, a scene from Disc Men of Jupiter.

The little girl is out in cold, cold space without her winter woollies. Cor stone the crows. It's plain enough in the story. I shan't quote, and shan't bother about all the minor detail, like she had her elbow 'ooked in the 'andle. If Bergey must show how well he can draw the female form divine, please give him scenes where said F.F.D. fits in.

Nuff said. No other complaints. Stories always pretty good, at the very least. Ethergrams amusing. We don't need any *Humorous* stories while we've got that, surely, Mr. Drogin? Humorous SF is generally punk science.

Now, a complaint. Oh, no, not to you, Ed. I have written to two blokes in the U.S.A., one who advertised in a British mag, and one from a States mag, who had back issues for sale. I sent the former a dollar bill I had left over from the Invasion, and the other a Reply coupon. I've had no reply from either. . . I formed a good opinion of the American lads I met during the recent fracas, but it's going down. As I don't think the majority are that way inclined, and there is always a possibility of postal delays, here's an offer. Will any chap (or gal) on that side with mags to sell write me? We can probably make some arrangement. There are a couple of British mags on the market, and I'll swap new ones of those for back issues.—*Fridaybridge Camp, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, England.*

Captain Slater didn't name names, unfortunately, or we'd ask the gentlemen (?) he wrote how come. If anyone who reads this knows their identity, tell them to get busy. Sounds like a scurvy deal, especially with U.S. currency almost unobtainable in England these days, at least by honest citizens.

Some of you more reputable collectors might give Captain Slater a pleasanter picture of U.S. fanactivities by seeing if you can work something out with him.

THAT BEM IS HERE AGAIN
by Robyn le Roy ("A Voice that Sells")

Der Ser:

So U want tu nō hwat my voys selz? Wel, Ser, enē-thing that U kan prōdūs over a mykrōfōn! U sē, *This* stāshunerē waz bilt for mē tu iuz in frē-lāns rādēo werk. And enēbodē nōz a leter-hed iz a gud mēdēum uv frē advertyzing.

Plēz nōt: Am iuzing trypryter now tu mak it ēzē-er for U to rēd my leterz.

Mā Y agen tel U hwat Y think in rē storēz? Thanx.

Mā SS:

Landz Uv Erthkwāk; novel but tējus.
Disk-Men; not werthe uv Haluvfām.
Kōlumbus . . .Dōp; lykt it. Helenjer-ish.
Arbyter; verē gud. Lots bētwēn lynz.
E. V.; Beter'n beter.
About Bergey—gud kuver, but hwār'z gal's spās-siut???????

Thanx for *the* tym. Kēp up *the* gud werk.—*1701 Beecher, Galesburg, Illinois.*

Hweed still leyek to cee a sails reeport on the reesults uv ewer vokeleyezing, Robyn, byt leest you spayerd us the treetis.

And anyone who found LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE tedious and has the nerve to write us in such illegitimately-born phonetics should be required to dine on typewriter ribbons with mushroom sauce—preferably poisonous mushrooms.

One more of these and we'll sue—but whether for cash or for mercy is still a moot question. *Brother!*

BACK FOR MORE
by Robert K. Paris

Dear Ed: I have the May SS before me, so I thought I'd drop a line. Cover: Ho, Hum, a shade better than usual, but it will still take a lot of improvement. It beats me how these cover-cuties can run around in open space half naked with no oxy-mask! And what do I see in the background? It can't be, but it is! Saturn! Ye gads, Ed, Wellman's tale took place on JUPITER! Tell Bergey to be a little more on the ball than this!

Pics: Best ones were for The Arbiter and Wellman's HF. The Pics for the novel were positively revolting. Marchioni is a good SF artist. I have admired his work from way back, but he simply can not illustrate a yarn like this one. The one for Columbus Was a Dope reached an all-time low.

Stories: Lands Of The Earthquake. A good fantasy yarn, but it did not belong in SS.

The Disc-Men of Jupiter. Best tale in the issue.

The Arbiter. Good old Fearn!

Columbus Was A Dope. Putrid! I can hardly believe Henlein wrote this. As for the Hall Of Fame stories, the selections are pretty good, usually lead the issue. But they can stand vast improvement.

All in all, SS is not bad, but it certainly is not on the level of 1939-40.

Let's see a lot of improvement in pics and Hall Of Fame.—*230 Spring Lake Street, Madisonville, Kentucky.*

So you liked us better in 1939-40. Well, let's see—

In 1939 the lead SS novels were Stanley Weinbaun's THE BLACK FLAME, Eando Binder's THE IMPOSSIBLE WORLD, Ed Hamilton's THE PRISONER OF MARS, Manly Wade Wellman's GIANTS FROM ETERNITY, Robert Moore Williams' THE BRIDGE TO EARTH and Jack Williamson's THE FORTRESS UTOPIA.

A year later, in 1940, SS novels included THE THREE PLANETEERS by Ed Hamilton, WHEN NEW YORK VANISHED by Henry Kuttner, TWICE IN TIME by Manly Wade Wellman, FIVE STEPS TO TOMORROW by Eando Binder, THE KID FROM MARS by Oscar J. Friend and A MILLION YEARS TO CONQUER by Henry Kuttner.

In both years, for the most part, the short stories, exclusive of the Hall of Fame selections, were executed by the lead novelists on off-months. Stanley G. Weinbaum, of course, is dead, cut off prematurely just as he was hitting his stride as a fine writer. Williamson has not come up with anything for this magazine in years and Wellman's stfactivity has been cut down of recent seasons by his notable successes in the detective and biographical fields.

Oscar Friend, who formerly handled this department, has been, lo, these many years in Los Angeles and active in other types of writing, while Eando Binder (just plain Otto Binder these days) is once again trying his wings at science fiction after a long stretch of writing comic continuities.

As for Hamilton and Kuttner, well, you'll be seeing them.

All of which comprises a fairly comprehensive account of what has happened to our

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authors of only a few years ago. Now let's take a look at the novels of the last twelve issues.

Unfortunately the final SS novel by Leigh Brackett, the memorable SHADOW OVER MARS, just fails the get in, being one issue too far back. But since she is now a well-established Hollywood writer (THE BIG SLEEP and others) it seems unlikely that we'll be seeing her in the near future. We'll leave that to Edmond Hamilton, who married her last winter.

However, back to business. The last twelve SS novels are IRON MEN by Noel Loomis, RED SUN OF DANGER by Brett Sterling, THE HOLLOW WORLD by Frank Belknap Long, AFTERMATH by John Russell Fearn, OUTLAW WORLD by Edmond Hamilton, VALLEY OF THE FLAME by Keith Hammond, OTHER EYES WATCHING by Polton Cross, THE DARK WORLD by Henry Kuttner, THE SOLAR INVASION by Manly Wade Wellman, THE STAR OF LIFE by Edmond Hamilton, THE LAWS OF CHANCE by Murray Leinster and LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE by Henry Kuttner.

Of these RED SUN OF DANGER, OUTLAW WORLD and THE SOLAR INVASION were Captain Future yarns. Discounting these specialized novels, we doubt very much if the quality of the earlier dozen runs much higher—excepting possibly THE BLACK FLAME, an admitted classic.

Some will root for Kuttner's WHEN NEW YORK VANISHED, but it's dollars to doughnut guns the theme would be mighty corny compared to his more recent THE DARK WORLD or LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE. And we seriously doubt whether either of Hamilton's earlier stories rate with his THE STAR OF LIFE—one of his very best.

But this could go on forever and already has. . . .

OUT OF WORDS
by Wilkie Conner

Dear Editor: Personally, I like Bergey! But, then, I also like Spinach! I doubt seriously if any of the paying customers would cancel their subscriptions because of a cover illustrator (even if *I* drew the cover—heaven forbid!).

But there is a possibility of attracting NEW readers with new and catchy covers.

Gorgeous gals definitely make a cover. One has only to look at the panorama of magazines displayed on any newsstand to see instantly the predominance of pretty girls. If the maidens of the future look anything like those Mr. B. depicts, then I hope the invention of a way to live many, many years isn't far off.

According to the letters of some of the more prominent fen, sex has no place in the modern s-f story. I ask, why? Will the men and women of the future be sexless, cold automatons? Or will they have all the emotions now found in every normal person? I do not believe in dragging in sex, just for the heck of it. But if sex is indicated, and needed, by the plot, then I say, bring it in!

Speaking of Kuttner, it is easy to recognize the excellence of his work, even under his many pen-names. I used to think he was the greatest LIVING s-f writer: now, I think he is the GREATEST S-F WRITER OF ALL TIME! (Come on Merritt, Weinbaum, Lovecraft and Van Vogt fans, crawl all over me!) Yes, I have just read his two greatest stories to-date: the TWS *April novella and the SS May epic novel. Classics,* both of them.

I wish I could tell you how much your magazines have improved in the last few issues. However, I do not have the words. Could you by any chance be aiming at a more mature, more intelligent audience? If you are, it is this reporter's opinion you are well on your way!—*Box 2392, West Gastonia, North Carolina.*

If this is your real opinion, Wilkie, then let's hope you remain wordless, just as you have above. It sounds might sweet, mighty sweet indeed!

ONE TOWEL COMING UP
by Fred Ross Burgess

Dear Editor: Seeing that I am now an artist, I'd like to offer a few sage (brush) comments on various things, and make one statement. Concerning my sending some of my material to you, don't worry. I realized long ago that I would have to live in New York and for that reason I have refrained from sending artwork to all magazines.

The comments concern our old friend Earle Bergey. You stated in response to Bob Granhart: (Quote) "When the mighty Earle draws an *un*lovely female, we'll throw in the towel." End of quote. I am expecting to see a towel come sailing out the window of your office in a very short while. The Earl of Bergey failed to do you credit this issue. Take one good long glance at the anatomy of our latest cover girl.

If we really want a "new era," then let us cease *all* references to the "hack era." I'm referring to one letter in this latest issue, the one wherein, in fact, where Mr. Jewett makes another ill-advised cut at my admitted hack letters. Let it be said now and forevermore that I admit writing "hack" letters. Let it hereby be recorded that I enjoyed writing these same letters. But, even though I am attempting to write a letter with a serious motive, I am condemning no single person or persons who wrote, or continue to write, this so-called "hack." Let he who may make the error of condemning something he himself has done take heed. I never did that, and I never will.

To more pleasant matters, I'll briefly give you my few opinions of the latest *Ethereal Vibrations.*

P. Reilly: I agree.

Chad Oliver: *Quoth the fan as he read this*
letter,
Some things go on, but by Chad
They're much better.

Rick Sneary: Thur is no suc wourd as "dies."

Robyn le Roy: Quit ribbin', Robyn!

Ed Farnham: Guilty conscience, *sans doubt.*

Gerry T. Crane: *OH! NO!* Finlay does use a brush instead of his fist.

Mme. Rose La Savio: Sorry.

Rex E. Ward: Ah ha! Fallacy!

Rickey Slavin: Old friends have a funny habit of showing up in this letter, but this letter is easily the most intelligent thing I've seen from Cherickey in some time . . . all save the last paragraph!

William E. Rose: The crowd has become a raging
Mass
Because of a fellow name of
Hass.
Let us know that in this
Class
Things are becoming a mell of a
Hass! (Satisfied, Chad?)

Peter W. Tappan: Wellman is good lately only in weird stories: if's it's stf you want, there's plenty elsewhere in the magazine.

Tom Pace: The author writes a letter with like results. (Abstract)

Tom Jewett: I've already mentioned this boy.

Robert K. Paris: We're hoping too.

Patricia J. Bowling: I'll talk to you in a personal letter, honey.

Bob Granhart: Show me the lovely female! The model, I mean.

Lin Carter: I also agree with you on the subject of Kuttner. He is too prolific.

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Edwin Drogin: They get younger and younger.

Wilkie Conner: You know darn well that Earle Bergey and Idiot J. Marchioni are irreplaceable. As far as we know, they'll never release these poor guys. The author again speaks.

Guerry Campbell Brown: ****, *****, *****, Get me?

John Koehler: Let's all stand and cheer for
Bergey.
Then we'll sit and sing his
Liturgy.
Gadzookas! Still younger!

Michael Cook: You really Cookin', brother! But yes!

Michael Wigodsky: My name is Ranoschnerd Gleep and I'm only two days old. I have been reading this magazine for thirty years and I think dat Hank Kuttner is simply lousy!

John Van Couvering: Ditto hubba, keed.

Alan Jones: Sing something for us. Nothing like a fellow who ain't afraid to say what he means. Anyway, you'll probably tell me to go jump in the Moon Pool for my tirade on the deserving T. J.

John R. Carroll: I hear you talkin'.

Lynn H. Benham: Have you ever tried to kiss a magazine cover, bud? (Say, thanks for the nifty little lyric from Hilaire.)

James Evans: Righto to the *nth!*

That's the crop. On the whole, they were as interesting a collection as has graced these pages for some long time.

The review of fanmags was disheartening. I'm berated for an illegible mag when I didn't even print the thing. You may blame Andy Lyon (Our gripes spring from tender Lyons) for the good plain reason that he is the erstwhile publisher. I'm only the editor and chief writer.

Stories on the whole were up to average. Most weren't to be considered classic, but Manly's reprint was worth reprinting.—*115 Aycock, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.*

Let it be said, Oh Prince of Scourges,
We'll waste no prose on Fred Ross
Burgess.
Throw in our towels, like storm of
hail
O'er Bergey's very sad female.
But really, Fred, why must you hew
at
That old hack letterwright, Tom
Jewett?
Let it be said forevermore,
You're rubbing salt on an old sore.
The item though that has us prowling,
Is what's with you and Patti Bowling.
On second thought it has us drooling
What's with you and Patti Bowling.
And just to keep things really rolling,
What *is* with you and Patti Bowling?

Enough for Ranoschnerd Gleep!

SWEET STUFF
by Virginia Maglione

Dear Sir: Another neophyte writes you—but an STFan from way back. Though I must have been a retarded child not to have started at the tender age of some fans.

Deep breath—rate for stories. . . .

COLUMBUS—Good, what a punch line!

HofF—novelet—Readable, but personally I would like to wallop all such spoiled babes—and all authors who make use of same. Aren't there enough troubles a space-ship could get into without such a corny device?

THE ARBITER—wonder if the actual production of atomic bombs brought on the fatalistic ending of which this is a poor example.

THE ETHER—Best of all, usually. Sneary, I love that man! Your comments on each letter are the real high spots of the mag.

Attention, first public opinion on Bergey—so he didn't read the story again, so what? As for Bergey's unclad babes, it's a shame such lovelies must be cluttered up with even such brief costumes. The late lamented BEMs, I love 'em—puleeze bring them back!

LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE—Saved the best till last. Hubba, hubba!—*13 Chadwick Street, South Acton, Massachusetts.*

Glad to have you with us, Virginia. As an old Concordian, we are interested in word from or of any fans in the vicinity. Is there much activity along STF lines up your way these days? You might drop us another line and let us know. In the meantime we'll do our best not to let you down.

OH-OH—HERE'S ANOTHER
by Robert Murphy

Dear Editor: Only in verse can I give it to you straight. So here goes—

On page 100 a letter by Rose—
Someone should get him, right by the nose.
You know no word to rhyme with smirk
But many such words must somewhere lurk.

Benham's letter could be no worse
He or she should get a ride in a hearse.
To find someone that doesn't like Merritt,
Well, I'll have to grin and bear it.

Merritt was really out of this world.
Minds better than mine he put in a whirl.
And when he died all fantasy lost
In the classic field, his name's embossed.

Just one thing better and here it's rated
A story by Merritt—Finlay illustrated.
That's but a dream, I'll say no more
Lest I become just another bore.
—*2702 South Liberty Street, Muncie, Indiana.*

No comment anent th'above fine pome is needed to drive weak men from home, but since you make us scream and tear it, we still like Kuttner over Merritt. Now sue!

BOOSTER FROM BREWSTER
by Tom Pace

Dear Sir: On the principle that the best way to review an issue of SS is to start at the starting point and let rip . . . the cover. It was, I am sorry to say, a very definite let-down after the delightful work by Bergey and Belarski on the last two issues. It just plain didn't appeal. *My* girl is better looking than that, by the way.

Wellman's DISC-MEN OF JUPITER didn't, either. To repeat myself, the Good-Old-Days myth has no basis in fact. Sure, and there were good stories then, once and awhile. But it's a poor issue of any (well, *almost* any!) stf mag that doesn't come out these days with at least one or two stories equalling the Good-Old-Days best.

Heresy, the man said.

LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE is simply one more step up for HK. I'm not going to get all effusive over this story. You can't add beauty to beauty by praising it.

But Skoal! again. And again.

Marchoni's pix for the Kuttner novel were swell.

Robert Heinlein, one of the best writers in the Stf field, turns up with a slick-mag story . . . which isn't always a compliment to a good pulp author, but which is, this time!

For some reason, Fearn's ARBITER failed to take hold with me. Too much competition, with HK and Robert Heinlein in the same ish.

Oliver seems to have disagreed with me about Hammond's STAR OF LIFE. Well, that's opinion. Oliver is quite a lot bigger than I, so even if I wished to, I couldn't do much about it.

If you want to wade through one of Rick Sneary's

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amazing letters, you are apt to find a lot of good sense in there. And, for a fact, for an "outsider" to call an Stf fan silly is plain nuts. Or plane nots, for Mr. Sneary.

Robyn le Roy makes my hair stand on end. Is *this* what phonetic spelling will come to? God in heaven!

Ed Farnham, though he may not recognize it himself, is quite conceited. There is enough "life" in SS and TWS without pointless and deliberate insults to people who are honestly expressing their opinions.

Miss Slavin deserves Stf's equivalent of an Oscar for her comment on the Bergey covers!! My girl has a bathing suit something like one Bergey's dark-haired model has used in the past . . . only it has no metal trappings and covers even less area. Oh, well, it's warm in Florida.

The Rose of Beaumont is carrying on an interesting wrangle with you, editor . . . let him keep it up. At least he scans fairly well . . . which, as I sheepishly admit, I don't.

Rob Paris stuck it out, and got it splattered, eh? Well, that's life. Or is it?

So Lin Carter objects to my placing HK up with AM, huh? Well, his opinion. But why does he turn around and place *Burroughs* up with Merritt, Taine, and Stapledon? Anyway, HK's work *does* compare with M., T., and S., and is far above Hamilton, Brackett and even Van Vogt and Heinlein . . . though after reading WOMAN OF THE WOOD and re-reading SHIP OF ISHTAR, I tend to make it a double championship between Kuttner and Merritt. But Kuttner's great production, continued, *will* place him *over* even the hallowed AM.

Proof is on pages 11-66 of this issue.

Wilkie Connor writes a darn interesting and intelligent letter. Maybe because he (also) agrees with me *anent* Kuttner.

Some of the youngsters now showing up in the letter columns rival the older fans in *corning* ability. But Michael Wigodsky (whom I don't believe is only 11) is pretty good.

Hooray for Hilaire Belloc . . . ever since reading his MAN WHO MADE GOLD, I have had an open heart for anyone praising him.

How James Evans can call Stf unimaginative and poorly written is beyond me. People who speak in generalities often say things like that, I believe. Or perhaps he just hasn't read much Kuttner. Or Heinlein. Or Brackett, Hamilton, Hammond, Bradbury, G. O. Smith, or Murray Leinster.

J. R. Carroll gives you a well-deserved pat on the back. Which I second. That letter column isn't the fans'; it's *yours*, Bud; and, Lordy, how you use it! I think I would like to drink beer and swap Kilroy stories with you, ex-Sarge; perhaps I shall, someday.—*Brewster, Florida.*

Well, we'd like to say a lot of things about your letter—including an expression of hope that we do meet in the flesh sometime, Tom—but for Pete's sake bring this alleged girl of yours along. We'd like a look.

As for Hilaire Belloc, remember his "As a friend of the children commend me the yak, you can lead it about with a string"? Truly a classic, as was "Lord Lundy" in the "Book of Bad Children". Both are unfortunately out of print.

HEINLEINITIS
by John Walsh

Dear Editor: Great gad, man! What have you done? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

The motive for this mild fit is a name on STARTLING'S latest contents page—Robert A. Heinlein! Presenting Bob Heinlein's first postwar work is an accomplishment of which you should be proud; and it proves once again that you're going whole hog to get some *writers* for your mags. De Camp . . . Pratt . . . Zagat . . . George O. Smith . . . Heinlein—whew! Give me air!

The cover on the May issue of SS induced the effect of a body punch after a full dinner, but outside of that, and excluding as ever the illustrations, this was a pretty neat number.

Lands of the Earthquake is a splendid story, and, tho straight fantasy, one which should give new hope to that school which contends that all SS's novels are trash. It reads like an historical novel for the first third or so—who ever heard of such a thing in STARTLING—then turned to Merrittish fantasy for the rest of the way. It's difficult to say which is the better, this novel or Leinster's great science-fiction tale last time. But of one thing I am sure: these are the best two consecutive lead stories that I've ever read in STARTLING.

Heinlein's in second (unusual title, hmmm?); the corny but readable Hall of Famer staggers into third, with friend Fearn bringing up the rear.

The Ether Vibrates was enjoyable as ever. Took me a while to get Oliver's "Die? I thought I'd laugh. . .", but I eventually did. Not a bad gag. Was rather shocked to see all this praise for *The Star of Life*. Seemed to me to be merely a glorified (?) Cap Future. The only really memorable stories by Hamilton I've encountered were *The Dead Planet* and *Forgotten World*. Oh, well, opinions.

Who's Astarita and let's have more of him. . . . Like to see Jack Williamson dwelling in your hallowed pages.—*154 North Main Street, St. Albans, Vermont.*

Okay, John, thanks for your appreciation of our not-so humble efforts. We are doing what we can and will continue to do so. As for Astarita, he is a very competent young artist who recently turned up from under our art editor's drawing board. You'll be seeing more of him. If you want more Heinlein, you'll find him at greater length in the October THRILLING WONDER STORIES, along with James MacCreigh and (believe it or not!) Leslie Charteris in the novelet spots, Manly Wellman, Hank Kuttner and Margaret St. Clair taking magnificent care of the shorts.

Putting the Saint in a science fiction magazine is going to stir up a whale of a controversy, we fondly believe. When you read the story, however, you'll see why we simply couldn't let it go anywhere else. Our companion magazine will be on the stands next month. It should be an interesting issue. The winners of the first fanzine contest will also be present.

WHAT IS ROBYN?
by Billie Lee Randolph

Dear Editor: What is it that your cover girl is looking so blissfully at? I looked and looked and looked, but all I could see were the Disc-men. I also thought the lady was supposed to wear a space-suit.

I have a wonderful idea. Why can't the authors all get together and agree as to the climes and atmospheres and inhabitants of the various planets?

Tell the other guys to stop picking on Rick Sneary. He's my pen-pal. They just lack the intelligence to decipher his letters. I am well on the way to using the same tipe spelling and grammer, I think it's fasinating.

The stories, in their correct order: LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE, THE ARBITER, COLUMBUS WAS A DOPE and, last and least, THE DISC MEN. The pics were all good, the stories were all good—hey, what am I saying? Pretty soon you'll have me saying the cover was good (heaven forbid)!

I am glad to see the advent of Robyn le Roy. Is it male or female. I am female.

Farewell—parting is such sweet sorrow. I can not wait till the next issue.—*Rainbow Café, Buchanan Dam, Texas.*

Watch that Sneary spelling (?), Billie—it

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creeps up on you and makes work for us. If we hadn't simply thrown up our hands in despair over Sneary his opera would not have appeared as they do of late.

As for your suggestion—we don't have enough trouble digging ideas out of our authors, I suppose. You'd prefer to have them limited by some sort of stf Court of Appeals. For that, Billie, you rate a cold shower under the Buchanan Dam spillway.

Robyn le Roy is apparently male—he is certainly the first robin to turn up around here. Wonder if he wears a red waistcoat. . . .

SOUTHWEST LYNN
by Lynn Stanley Cheney

Dear Editor: During the past few issues, three stories struck me as truly being something to rave about. They were "The Dark World" by Henry Kuttner, "The Star of Life" by Edmond Hamilton and "Lands of the Earthquake" by Henry Kuttner.

"The Dark World" heads my list. Novels such as that are few and far between. One of the finest stories ever to appear in Startling Stories.

"The Star of Life" by Edmond Hamilton was excellent writing. Brings back memories of other superb Hamilton works such as "Forgotten World" and "The Dead Planet."

In "Lands of the Earthquake" Kuttner does it again. It's amazing how that man can write.

Now for the drawings. In the January issue there was only one good picture, the one illustrating "Venus Mines". However the March issue was an improvement with four of the six drawings being of merit. The exceptions were those for "The Soma Racks" and "Stellar Snowball". And in the May issue there was only one good picture, illustrating "Columbus Was a Dope". The covers on all three were nothing to brag about.—*743 Orange Avenue, Yuma, Arizona.*

Sorry you didn't go for THE LAWS OF CHANCE, Lynn, but the stories you did prefer all rate well with us. We'll see what we can do about getting the illustrations more appealling to you. By and large your objections seem to be those of the rest of the bleaters.

ONE-MAN CAMPAIGN
by Franklin Kerkhof

Dear Sir: In this, my first letter to a S-F editor, I am beginning a one-man campaign for the advancement of science-fiction. Let us bring it out from its hiding place between lurid covers into respectability. I shall begin by analyzing the May issue of *Startling Stories.*

The first thing I read was, as usual, The Ether Vibrates. I am quite pleased to find that you have begun to put real scientific discussions at the beginning. Keep it up, and let's have more comments from the readers! The letters were, as usual, entertaining.

The first story I read was "Columbus Was a Dope". Heinlein has written many good stories, but this was a miserable flop in my opinion. Next came "The Disc Men of Jupiter". This was one of the best H of F's you have printed. However good the earlier stories were, better ones are written today.

"The Arbiter" was not very well written and was based on a well-worn theme. Variations on themes must be masterful to be good.

As for Kuttner's yarn, I have not read it yet, but shall when I have nothing better to do. Sorry, I don't care too much for Kuttner. He is a fine writer, but his stuff is not really science-fiction. As long as he is preceded by Leinster and succeeded by George O. Smith I shall not complain.—*1705 Q Street, Northwest, Washington 9, D. C.*

Once and for all, brother Kerkhof, let's get this thing straight. So Kuttner is no Einstein—well, the reverse is equally true. While we should very much like to see the famed long-haired doctor try to put his theorems into fictional form, well—we'll still take Kuttner where fiction is concerned.

And science fiction, as long as it *is* fiction, must be fiction first and foremost and all the time before even a trickle of so-called "serious" science is allowed in. Otherwise, dullness, the unforgivable sin, lies immediately ahead.

Science fiction is great at times, not because it applies science, but because it allows the trained human imagination to leap beyond the bounds of science convincingly. In short, it is magic—and as long as it *is* magic, we're for it, all equations notwithstanding.

Good writing is a lot tougher to master than any mathematical theorem . . . delve into even the better-grade PhD thesis if you don't believe it.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO POME
by Hugh Allen

Dear Sir: No more doggerel, huh? Woof to you. But maybe a bit of pupperel?

The good old Sarge
Is laid to rest;
But spill no tears,
It's for the best.

That Xeno got him
In his prime;
(The stuff'll do it
Every time.)

Plot no circle
For his ether barge,
Lest it return,
And bring the Sarge!

Now we can move on to other vital matters. The covers, for instance. More to the point, or rather to the *curves*, the ladies *on* the pictures. Time was when your cover gals exhibited more epidermis than the gal next door when she sweeps the back porch in her play suit. But now? Do I have to tell you?

Science Fiction magazines are supposed to be a few jumps ahead of real life, but, brother, real life has overtaken you in this highly interesting field.

Of course, there may be a scientific explanation. Perhaps your artists have gotten so far into the future that the tops of costumes, ever coming downward, and the bottoms of costumes, ever climbing higher, have overlapped and continued to extend, so that we are seeing the tops extending too far down and the bottoms too far up.

If this is the case, I suppose there's nothing to do about it except dread the day the trend continues until the little numbers reach ears and ankles.

As for the stories (after all, lots of mag purchasers do look further than the covers). Frankly, also earnestly, (With Tom, Dick and Harry too, if you want 'em) they're not what they should be.

As a fan who got on the wagon with Dr. Hugo Gernsback's Vol. 1 No. 1 and remembers the Skylark stories, today's seem far less thrilling or startling. Perhaps we're satiated with the same old plots, or lack of same. Or perhaps Science Fiction was just new to us then.

But, honest, ed, present offerings are indubitably, on the average, less well-written and contain more "hay" than comparable screeds in other fiction mags—the love mags or Westerns or detectives. Most of those are tightly written and well-plotted. Why couldn't Science Fiction get the same quality?

Oh, well.

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Just one more brickbat: Back in the good old days eds didn't fill up enough space (for free) with letters from readers to hold another story!—*1911 Nadine Street, Knoxville 17, Tennessee.*

Frankly, Hugh, we know not where
Them flannel undies came from,
Alas, like you, we cannot bear
To see each cover dame from
Neck to knee in such deep drape,
Completely hiding each sweet shape.

However, re your story crits
Our feelings aren't in line,
You're scoring misses and not hits
In praising stars that used to shine,
You'd find nostalgia to blame
If you picked out our Hall of Fame.

DEAD CENTER
by John C. Bastow (magician)

Dear Sir: After mature consideration (snap decision) I have come to the conclusion following, to-wit:
Half the readers think:
1. Bergey is odiferous
2. Sarge smells
3. All letter writers but IT have an undelicate aroma.
4. S.S. is a publishing mistake.
The other half are of the opinion:
1. Bergey is swell
2. Sarge still smells
3. Letters are swell
4. S.S. is swell
So you see they agree on naught (well maybe one point, I forgot which). That is why I shall go on record as having: no comment.—*97 St. Patrick Street, St. Catherines, Ontario.*

If this is an example of what your letterhead claims is "sophisticated sorcery in the modern manner", Mandrake, the accent upon various unpleasant aromas seems a trifle heavy. Save for item No. 2, however, in both sets of judgments, you may have something at that.

Who is this non-com you talk about? Someone should tell us these things as I find many references to him in the correspondence. Now, to turn to something more palatable. . . .

CRANFAN
by Greg Cranston

Dear Editor: I have a very definite grudge against all fantasy stories appearing in science-fiction magazines, even those by Kuttner. Try as I might, I couldn't pin down any science points in LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE. It was a good story, though, and quite interesting. The H of F story was one of the best to appear in that section lately, and the shorts were good reading.

One of the readers made a—shall we say attempt—to simplify the spelling of the English language. He made a h—l of a lot of mistakes, but the best one was spelling the story titles in his own system, and then using quotation marks. Who was he quoting? Himself?

You, dear editor, most likely know more about Canadian Fandom than I ever will, but I'll try to tell you something of what's happening in the "Ambitious City" of Hamilton. A small nucleus of fans are working to bring about the creation of a group to discuss science-fiction stories, theories, and authors.

When we get started we'll have a fan-mag, and you'll see it if we do. If there are any fen or wofen in their late teens who are at all interested, just mail me a post-card, or something.

I've been thinking of writing some for your magazines. I love STARTLING; I love the rough edges; I love the pics, hack and even the ads.—*184 Glen Road, Hamilton, Ontario.*

We answered that fantasy-stf business a few letters back, Greg, but we're glad you liked the yarn anyway. As for your comment on Robyn le Roy (who shall be nameless), should it have been, "*Whom* was he quoting?"—not "Who"?

Just how all these Canadian letters happened to come together is something of a mystery. We've been through the letters, sorting and arranging them, a number of times. But here is another, so let's have at it. . . .

SUCCINCT
by G. A. Smith

Sir: Two queries—
(a) What significance is there in that fact that in your May, 1947, issue fully 41.6% of your correspondents are semi-illiterate?
(b) Can there be a positive correlation between the quality of your stories and the almost negative number of those same stories which have been republished in science fiction anthologies?—*Queens University, Kingston, Ontario.*

To query (a) we reply in kind—aren't you rating the literacy of our correspondents a trifle high?

To query (b)—to date the anthologies put out in stf have been by persons interested in or connected with rival publications—and naturally they value their own selections above ours or they would not have selected them. Wait until we put out an anthology of our own. Then you'll see, Smitty.

BEEF HASH
by B. De Revere

Dear Editor: Well, the latest issue of *Startling* just arrived and I can't help telling you all about it.

Since the cover is the first thing that meets the eye let us comment on that first. The Early Berg is getting better every time. Nice girl, nice colors, nice background. . .nice *everything*. But would 'ol Saturn appear so close from Jupiter?

Lands of the Earthquake was a wonderful story. I especially liked the Oracle. She reminded me somewhat of *Norhala* of *The Metal Monster*. Tho' I'd really rather not remind myself of the latter tale.

The Heinlein yarn was a pleasant surprise indeed. His first in a long while 'twould seem, and good olde *Startling* got him first. It kept me guessing, too, until the end. Modest chaps, we humans. (eh?)

The Hall of Flame Classic was awful. Quite a letdown after the former story. How many times has this plot been used?

Recently I ran across a second-hand mag shop with old Gernsback *Wonders*. Hence you may be deluged with my suggestions for *The HOF*.

Please re-print Ed Hamilton's *Conquest of Two Worlds*. If you read it I think you'll note that it's worthy of republication.

Fearn's story was excellent off-trail stuff. At least the *ending* was diff. Fearn is one of your most brilliant short-story writers.

TEV: Ahhh, nice long Oliver letter. Hass has certainly gotten what he deserved. Sneary; What does QS stand for? Robyn le Roy; huh? How did Edward Drogin get through your one-man-asteroid-belt with that opening?

The interiors this time were horrible. Ugh . . . Mar-

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chioni! I hoped Virgil Finlay or Lawrence illustrate the novel.

All in all, this is a very satisfactory issue of SS except for interiors. Tho' the fella who illustrated the Heinlein yarn was o.k. You are doing an A-1 job of improving your mags as a whole. Plize to continue.—*356 St. Pauls Avenue, Stapleton, Staten Island, New York.*

Thanks B.—B. ?, sounds like a girl's name, so is it?—and we don't know what QS means unless it's "quite sweet" or something of that ilk. As for Hamilton's "Conquest of Two Worlds", it was recently selected for HofF republication in the near future by this writer. A story of real merit. The only thing that may prevent its appearance is its length.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE
by Lester Cole

Dear Sir: This missive is concerned with what I have found in "The Ether Vibrates."

I hate to admit this—please understand that I'm not giving a testimonial to the man—but Bergey is right!! I noticed the female on the cover; how could I help it? She looked all out of proportion to me. Thence came the usual pros and cons from the readers. A rather brilliant idea came to me: "Aha," I thought, "I've got Bergey trapped at last". Without further ado, using a scale, a 6 ft. steel tape, a slide rule, a semester's course in Anthropology and my wife, I performed my experiment. Bloody and partially bowed, I ask you to look at the following figures:

Item Length	A. "Bergey" (May, '47)	A Human
Head	11.6%	13.2%
Neck	5.6	5.8
Trunk	30.5	31.4
Thigh	26.3	23.2
Leg	26.3	26.4
Arm	35.6	38.8
Total	100.3	100.0

Percentages are given in terms of item length over overall body length. Details given on request, but experimentor must supply own materials and subject.

I still don't like Bergey. He can't draw dinosaurs, and the recent issue showing a member of the Order Eurypterida swimming through Titan's seas was a little too much. Parallel evolution, Mr. Bergey?

Lin Carter, of course, made me blow my top. How he can even equate Merritt, Lovecraft, Burroughs et al to Van Vogt, Heinlein, Hamilton, Bond and Kuttner is beyond me. Merritt and Lovecraft wrote *fantasy*, pure and simple (Ia, Ia, Ia—hey!). Van Vogt and Heinlein write politico-sociological science fiction with secondary emphasis on technology. Hamilton and Bond have trés nebulous ideas on technology and practically none on social trends. Kuttner occupies an intermediary position. The above, by the way, is *my* own opinion.

Tom Pace's definition of science fiction as "literature based on the ability to wonder what happens when a plus b equals the square root of infinity" needs a bit of qualification. As she now stands, Tom, the equation of science fiction equals an indeterminate—it's meaningless. Let's change that square root of infinity to read the square root of any integer n, where n equals 1. . . . . n.

Thanks for dropping Sergeant Saturn. That omission has been long overdue.

One other thing—is Rick Sneary kidding?—*2903 Grove Street, Berkeley 3, California.*

Nice going, Lester!

BAREFOOT BOY
by John Van Couvering

Dear Ed: New SS. Well . . . I suppose it's expected of me, so I will run barefooted through your hair about the May ish. In order: Cover. Here's Bergey again, on his superior average . . . but EGAD! where's the third corner of our weird little triangle? BEM . . . yes . . . a scad of the dear little beasties . . . they reminded me a bit of my grandma's braided rugs coming unraveled in the middle.

LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE was definitely below the previous Kuttner standard. Many things were either over—or underemphasized, and the total result was cornfusing. DISC-MEN OF JUPITER was about the best HofF yet. Despite derogatory picturization by Bergevonna cover, the story was the best in the issue. COLUMBUS WAS A DOPE might also be applied to ye Ed for accepting the story. But it DID mark the return of Heinlein . . . which is encouraging. Get him to do a story in TWS. THE ARBITER was disappointing. It could have been developed into a hot novel without any effort. But why did all of mankind have to die? Surely there must have been *some* way of keeping a few alive.

AHHHHH. . . .TEV! I'll do a little ether-vibrating of my own now. First, a gripe. Purely personal. Look, ed, don't I rate? I don't think there's been anything over two lines at the bottom of any of my letters. I been foully fouled. I quote a few: "Well, at least it isn't in poetry." "Hubba, hubba hubba, John." And then there's . . . no. I take it back. In the March '47 ish it's five whole lines! Well, anyhow, you get what I mean. Onward, never falter.

A rotten egg to Robyn. And, in his case, "The voice that sells" should be spelled with an "m." Gad, what is the object of all those squiggles over the letters? English is complicated enuf without nuts like that going around just asking to be cracked. Farnham sounds like an editor's dream. . . Sneary's special brand of English is hot stuff.

Ugh. GAAAA! The poetry you needle-noggins sling at each other! To quote Lovecraft, "Hideoushorrible hideoushorriblehideoushorrible." There, that ought to keep the HPL fans off my neck. Jest between us thick-headed morons, though, he nauseates me.—*902 North Downey Avenue, Downey, California.*

All right, John, since you ask for more lineage, go ahead and get sick. Next time tell us how your grandma braids rugs. Might be more interesting. But you do have the right slant of Lovecraft, baby.

ROSCO IS RIGHT (WE HOPE!)
by Rosco E. Wright

Dear Editor: For several years—about nine—I have taken my science-fiction seriously but for some reason or another I never got around to writing to either of your two magazines. However your incredible improvement in the past few months has led me to break my silence.

There are now three science-fiction magazines of which I am very proud. THRILLING WONDER STORIES and STARTLING STORIES are two of them. I wish some of the other magazines would follow your examples.

It stands to reason the more good stf magazines on the market the more apt an author is to put time into a better than ever story. He knows that if one publication is overstocked there is another one that will consider the same story. On the other hand, if there were one good magazine and the rest wanted sexy stories with blood and thunder and "no deep thinking" even when logical, well—ye old writer would be apt to say: "There is only one good stf market . . . the other mags are too cheap for this idea. Maybe I'd better shelve the story and write a detective yarn so I can pay the rent."

Now to your May '47 issue:

LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE by Kuttner was refreshingly different. Kuttner's vivid presentation of the lands he imagines is fascinating. The story had just the right amount of suspense, a reasonable amount of action and above all originality.

THE ARBITER by Fearn was a skillful and ghastly little idea compactly and interestingly told. Fearn is another top man.

COLUMBUS WAS A DOPE by—well it's hard to believe, but how did you ever get Heinlein? The tale was not scientific but it was humanly reasonable and futuristic.— *Box No. 191, Toledo, Oregon.*

Thanks, Rosco, we're in there pitching. We quite agree about general stf magazine improvement lifting the general level of story

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submissions—not that we don't draw our full share of wastebasket fodder.

As for Heinlein, he got us, for which praise Allah.

HAPPY MAN
by Phil Barker

Dear Editor: I was certainly a happy man when I finished reading Henry Kuttner's "Lands of the Earthquake". Kuttner is worth the price of STARTLING any old time. Your others were fairly good for the average run of shorts too. Of course, I'm exempting Wellman's tale from this category; it stands in a private category all its own. It was thoroughly enjoyable. In fact, your whole magazine is on the upgrade.

I do have a few gripes on my intelligent mind. I know that you would have heart-failure if a reader said that he liked the whole thing *as is*. I do not like Marchioni. Your cover was better than usual. You managed to do without the hero, now do without the BEMs, and the next issue do without the girl—then it'll be perfect.

I have one other major complaint, and that is that you have discontinued CAPTAIN FUTURE magazine. I have a complete collection of the ones published up to date, and I hate to have them stop here with so few issues. And also, what ever happened to the CAPTAIN FUTURE club? Has it gone out along with C. F., or does it still exist and take part in supporting C.F.'s cause?

One other loud lament. I regret the increasing load of doggerel verse dumped upon you, but, for heaven's sake, you don't have to print the darn stuff, do you? Here I was, thumbing through the reader's column, and suddenly I was hit in the face with a mass of rotten verse by some reader, followed by another dollop by ye Ed. I've had enough already—please stop! (And if you answer this in verse, you're gonna lose a reader—*me!*)

Who is this Fred Ross Burgess mentioned by Patti Bowling? If he's good, let's get him busy illustrating—I think you should hold a talent contest for new artists with a position on your staff for the winner.—*620 So. Stevens Street, Tacoma 6, Washington.*

Captain Future and his club are, alas, in a state of cataleptic refrigeration at the moment, Phil. Chances of revival are dim at present. So pride yourself on having him complete.

But as for calling our verse rotten we really feel that you have gotten a trifle callused in the head. Such intellectual vacuity in short denies all perspicuity.

Burgess has already given his answer. Your idea of holding a contest for illustrators is moderately interesting. But how many of them can handle dry brush or perform the prodigies with pen or scratchboard which make Stevens and Finlay so outstanding?

PREFERENCE WITHOUT DEFERENCE
by Benjamin M. Birnbaum

Dear Sir: Being no bush-beater-arounder I shall start with my reasons for writing to your (?) mag. It is time-honored and has come down (probably) through generations (I mean the reason, not the mag). It is (fanfare) that I would like the dubious honor of seeing my name in print (item one).

Item two—The stories. In order of preference:

1. DISC-MEN OF JUPITER. Velly, velly, good; but that pic by Morey at the beginning was enough to make a habitual inebriate take the oath. Going back to the story, I liked the idea of a half gaseous Jupiter. In my opinion, MWW is one of the best authors in the business.

2. LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE was a long way down from D-M of J, but the two shorts were beyond disgust, so I had to rate Kuttner's yarn second. That something-or-other Kuttner does all right on SF, but once he starts on fantasy, he's hopeless.

Now skip ten million and then rate the shorts, and you won't be far wrong. Personally, though, I thought Fearn could do better than that "Arbiter" thing.

Item three—The pics (order as in the mag).

Pg. 11—A-a-a-a-a-a-GH.

Pg. 13—Fair. Now I believe in miracles.

Pg. 17—If Marchoni were thrown off that tower, I'd like it better.

Pg. 67—Nice...

Pg. 70-71—Let me die in peace.

Pg. 90—If I used profanity, I'd curse Marchoni from here to H—. Ahem, Hades and back!

Item four—*GET THE SARGE & CO. BACK!* Honest it doesn't seem like the same mag anymore.—*1544 Park Place, Brooklyn 13, New York.*

Well, I suppose even Brooklyn allows every man to his own taste.

JE NE COMPRENDS PAS
by Wallace Weber

Dear Editor: What a predicament! Here I have read the May issue from cover to cover, gotten out my typewriter plus paper and prepared to get my name in print when it dawns on me that you want only *good* letters in your magazine. Now I can't think of a single original way of presenting my ideas.

If I were to tell you that the novel by Kuttner was good despite the fact that it wasn't strictly stf, you would say that all the readers know that by now and throw my letter away. Were I merely to suggest that the cover should either be accurate or else not even attempt to illustrate a story you would comment, "Old stuff," and toss my masterpiece in the trash can. Saying the magazine was superb would be considered "apple-polishing" and saying it was lousy would be too ordinary.

My one hope is to comment constructively on some of the problems and discussions in the letter section. The trouble is, I don't understand any of them. I could make a try at it even if I only have a vague idea of what it's all about, but then I have seen too many gory remains of fans who dared enter into an argument without sufficient knowledge of what he was talking about.—*Box No. 858 Ritzville, Washington.*

That makes two of you tadpoles in a row. What is this—let's get ourselves in print week?

FOR THE LOVE OF MIKE!
by Michael Wigodsky

Dear Sir: Thank you, thank you, thank you! You published my letter, you lovely man!

And *now* to the stories:

LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE: Wonderful! Superb! The best fantasy I ever read!

THE DISC-MEN OF JUPITER: Whose popular demand?

COLUMBUS WAS A DOPE: Very good.

THE ARBITER: *This* gives you something to think about.

As for the illustrations, *who cares?*

LETTERS: Sir, you and I have something in common! I, also, would like to know what the English Professor thought about THE DARK WORLD!

All in all, a wonderful issue!—*306 Evans Avenue, San Antonio, Texas.*

Thanks, Michael.

BLATHERINGS
by Guerry Campbell Brown

Dear Editor: Well, here we go again. Brown's Bothersome Blatherings. Or you might call it Guerry's Gruesome Gibberings. Anyway, it'll be a letter about the May issue of *Startling Stories.*

First, the stories. Using my rating system of nulls

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(*s), the lineup is as follows: (You recall, don't you. One null is a very good story, 2 or 3 average, 4 bad, 5 or more terrible!!)

Lands of the Earthquake: ** (Nothing special, but good, entertaining fantasy. Kuttner's usual excellent style of writing.)

Columbus was a Dope: ** (Very entertaining little short. Heinlein also has a very good style of writing.)

The Disk-men of Jupiter: *** (Hall of Fame CLASSICS! Migosh! Mioops! They don't like such language in print! There's nothing particularly wrong with the stories, it just isn't hot stuff.)

The Arbiter: ** (Also an excellent short. I've a liking for such stories, where the human race is destroyed by some mere accident of nature, or of science.)

Cover: ** (Nice coloring, and fairly accurate. Except, Bergey must like to show off wimmen's figures so much that he doesn't even bother to put spacesuits on them, even when the story calls for it! I think the consequences of going out into space without a spacesuit on have been pretty well discussed in this column by now.—*P. O. Box No. 1467, Delray Beach, Florida.*

If you want to know what happened to the rest of your letter, Guerry—well, try writing the next one on one side of the paper instead of both. We don't like two-sided correspondence (two sides of the paper, that is). Turning over the average epistle received at this desk is a trifle too much like turning over a large stone in damp ground. You never know what may crawl out.

GOING DOWN
by David Reiner

Dear Sir: I'd like to utter a mild protest against the slow but steady downward trend of the material appearing in STARTLING STORIES. Whatever the reason, the sad situation calls for action.

When the usually reliable standbys begin to turn out plain-and-fancy hack, somebody or something needs a shot in the arm. First Wellman is responsible for the horrific space-bustin' juvenile saga of Cap'n Future, THE SOLAR INVASION. A terrific letdown by an author who has won many deserved laurels for his carefully-contrived stories.

Maybe I shouldn't be too harsh with Hamilton. After all, he's been around a long time, authored Zeus knows how many yarns and maybe he's just suffering from the stf.-writer's occupational hazard: "Neogalactic nausea." Still, I can't say that THE STAR OF LIFE in the January issue will be remembered with the many Hamilton classics. Its saving grace is the swift pace with which the novel moves. It prevents the reader from noticing the moldly plot and rehashed characters.

And then along comes the cruelest blow of all! The May issue. I shudder. Henry Kuttner has now joined the ranks of those unenvied others whose amazing prolificity finally undid them . . . Here's a fellow who knows how to write like nobody's business. But in his latest novel, LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE he rings no new bell; adds nothing to his already proven reputation. I hope it's just a temporary lapse. After DARK WORLD, I can't imagine anything else.

As for the rest of the issue, I am particularly startled to see a short-short by Heinlein. After finishing it, I wonder how this one got by the wastebasket. COLUMBUS WAS A DOPE is an ill bit of flim flam.

THE ARBITER by Fearn is a typical yarn by one of stf.'s greatest hacksters. He's turned out more cosmic-sounding, empty meaning stuff than any other author extant.

The Hall of Fame Novelet, THE DISC-MEN OF JUPITER, rates an approving nod. Although dated in many respects, this story by Wellman reveals many traces of the craftsmanship we have come to associate with his work.

Although appealing to a certain section of the population (male), Bergey's cover makes for many a long stare and wicked leer. This month's eye-catcher has all the standard visual delights, including neatly proportioned lass, extra-terrestrial creatures (polite way of referring to 'em, huh?) and a glimpse of a couple of outsized orbs. But nice.

All of which adds up to a loud beef about the quality of the stories, a pat on the back for the artwork and a skeptical hope for future improvement.—*116 Nassau Street, New York 7, New York.*

Once again it seems to be a matter of taste. From your preference for the HofFer against the more modern yarns it is evident that you are one of the old galactic space-opera fans. So be it.

When stf (post World War One style) was new, Jules Verne was long dead, H. G. Wells had long since given up stf for social commentary in thin disguised fiction forms and Lord Dunsany was turning out only an occasional scientifiction yarn.

So all the old Verne and Wells ideas were comparatively new to the bulk of readers. Backed up by new reaches of scientific development they took on a freshness that really was not theirs. Dr. E. E. Smith's stories and the work of many others, which skipped lightly from planet to planet, star to star or galaxy to galaxy, reinforced with wonderful BEMs, caught on with the mass of new readers. They had scope, vastness and the magic of guessing at the unknown.

It was almost like rediscovery of the love story.

Since then, however, there has been no such fallow period from which the old ideas could be brought triumphantly resurgent. Consequently, as in the love story, the current period is one of development within these ideas, of delving deeper into human and extra-human reactions to alien conditions, of computing how men and women and children and—well, modified BEMs—would react in conditions only slightly varied from those which formerly caused them to say, "Gee whiz!"

It is, to our way of thinking, a healthy development. Only through such a process, painful as it may be to author, editor and reader alike at times, can science fiction (either in its "pure" or fantasy forms) hope to become a full-fledged literature. A glance through the old issues is most reassuring in this respect. However, it does demand the development of the reader along with the author—which is where the roots of most current disapproval lie.

LOVE THAT MAN!
by Don Wilson

Dear Editor: As a rule, I don't write in to your publication. However, I can't let the May issue of STARTLING go by without at least a few comments. For it is, bar none, the best issue of SS that I have ever seen. And that is saying something, because you have turned out some top-flighters in your day.

First, of course, there is LANDS OF THE EARTHQUAKE, by Henry Kuttner. I would be the last one to praise it, as I didn't like DARK WORLD or his other recent efforts. I didn't like what seemed a cheap imitation of Abe Merritt. However, after this one, count me in as a Kuttner fan. I very seldom rave over a story; it is not part of my nature to rave. But this yarn was MAGNIFICENT, in every sense of the word.

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The Hall of Fame classic was the first one I've read in a long time that was worth reprinting. Of course, VENUS MINES INC was okay, but far from a classic. While the other "classics" in recent years have been *nothing* but drivel. However, *DISCMEN* was far from drivel. Naturally, it wasn't up to H. K.'s novel, but it's the best HoF classic yet. Incidentally, it's interesting to compare the difference of approach of the oldtime space opera and the modern, more mature story. Usually the old timer suffers, but in this case it did okay.

Well, whaddaya know! Heinlein in SS, yet! With one of his best shorts, too. COLUMBUS WAS A DOPE was right up there.

Rest of the mag up to snuff. Marchioni outdid himself, with some almost-good-enough-to-be-called-mediocre illustrations. Morey was okay, but that's all. Keep Lawrence/Stevens and Finlay coming.

Bergey is definitely getting better. I never had any comments about his workmanship, altho his color schemes used to be awful. Now he is using darker backgrounds, less yellow and bright orange, which is a real improvement. The gals are as gorgeous as ever, although in line with your policy for mature stories and maturity in the letter columns, you might make the covers better too. . . .

Your editorials are beginning to reveal thought and insight. Keep it up. The Ether Vibrates was okay, as usual, and the Fanzine Reviews were up to snuff. Wish you could include a bit more up-to-date info on fmz, however.

Well, just keep this up forever. The next issue will have to go some to beat this, but I have a vague hunch that it'll be even better. You have improved TWS and SS immeasurably in the two years you have been editor; two more years should see them the unquestioned leaders in the field. And I will be the first to acknowledge you there; like my friend JoKe, I am not quite as much a worshipper of the present "leader" as the average.—*495 North Third, Banning, California.*

Thanks, Don. We were feeling a bit blue after Dave Reiner's bleat. As for progress, remember, we are primarily dependent upon what our writers give us to run. If (the gods forbid!) they should all go into a slump at once, the magazine would be the ultimate sufferer.

May they ever improve.

HIGHBROW, HUH!

by (Miss) Ruby A. Anderson

Dear Sarge: Yes, I did say "Sarge." Just because we asked you to cut out the space lingo and leave off your three pals doesn't mean that we want you to go highbrow on us. One query, please. In the latest issues of TWS and SS you don't sound like yourself. Has the old Sarge bowed out in favor of a younger one with younger ideas? Personally, I still like the old one (minus space lingo, Wartears and the others, of course). May I hazard a guess? Our new Sarge must be Bergey in disguise.

Speaking of Bergey, while I am no art critic, I will have to admit that he definitely can draw—the kind of pictures that should never be found on a science-fiction magazine cover.

I have just finished "Lands of the Earthquake," by Henry Kuttner, in the May issue. It was very good, though for some reason I didn't like the title. If I must give a reason for this, I suppose it is because the title gives a false impression of the story. True, earthquakes do occur, but they are merely incidental. —*921 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee.*

Okay, Ruby, we'd like to see you official title thinker-upper for us. It ain't no sinecure.

And the new Sarge (hate that word!) is definitely *not* the Earle of Bergey in a long flowing hooded robe. He's not the Earle of anything, nor a Sarge. And never mind whom we sound like. We're simply (or not

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so simply as the case may be) ourselves.

WITHOUT CLEMENTSY
by Jack Clements

Dear Ed: With the May issue in hand, somewhat worn from handling, your reviewer sits down at his L. C. Smith and tells Ye Ed. and Ye. Hon. Readers how it stacked up with him. It seems that it stacks up very favorably.

To begin with, the cover is purty good. Frankly I've always had a fondness for Bergey's paint slinging and his work is definitely improving. Incidentally, was the cover on the March ish intended to make us appreciate Bergey more? I know it had that effect on me. No more of Belarski, please.

Glancing idly at the interior illo's, we find that anything more than an idle glance would be harmful to the health of the observer. Morey I can take, but Marchioni, NO. It was such a disappointment not to see Stevens on the Kuttner novel. No one can better capture the mood of a Kuttner story than Stevens. With the art (?) work duly (dully?) taken care of, we turn to the stories.

Lands of the Earthquake was, of course, excellent. No need to comment further.

Disc Men of Jupiter was truly deserving of its Hall of Fame title. It was not as good, tho, as the first story in the series. This department, by the way, is definitely looking up.

Both the Fearn story and Bob Heinlein's yarn were swell shorties and were a definite change over the old days.

TEV is much better than it used to be. I was afraid the humor would be gone, but now, where once the most that could be hoped for was semi-humorous drivel, we find some real thought along with some real laughs. I agree with you that Rick Sneary's letters are terifick. I lyke them to.

It has long been my contention that Chad Oliver (a former Cincinnatian, by the way) can not write a poor letter. That boy is terrific, spelled with a capital SWELL.

In closing, I would like to say that STARTLING STORIES has climbed from the bottom of my list to the top. You're really doing a swell job there. I sign off with pleas for more Kuttner, Bradbury, Leinster and George O. Smith, and more letters by JoKe ennedy.—*6310 Madison Road, Cincinnati 27, Ohio.*

This letter was truly sweet of you, Jack, but you too had best watch the Snearyspelling. That way madness lies!

PUTRESCENCE
by Roscoe Rehm

Dear Editor: Egad, what a cover . . . phew! Which finishes that subject, however let us go on to more sprightly things. The Stories for instance. Well the only one really worth reading was John Russell Fearn's tale, The Arbiter. This seemed to be very reminiscent of his work ten or fifteen years ago. Yes indeed.

Kuttner's "Lands Of The Earthquakes", was putrid. The plague on that worthy gentleman for writing such abominable drivel. He studies his characters' minds too much. Perhaps more action would have helped. People's minds are not usually entertaining. Less of such atavism and more science fiction would be welcome. It's being well written is no excuse for its existence.

Columbus Was A Dope—well, the illustration wasn't so bad, but the story's trick ending was slightly sickly. Such cynical atavism (that word again!) The Disc Men Of Jupiter, Hmmm. . . . It was all right. The departments are fairly interesting.

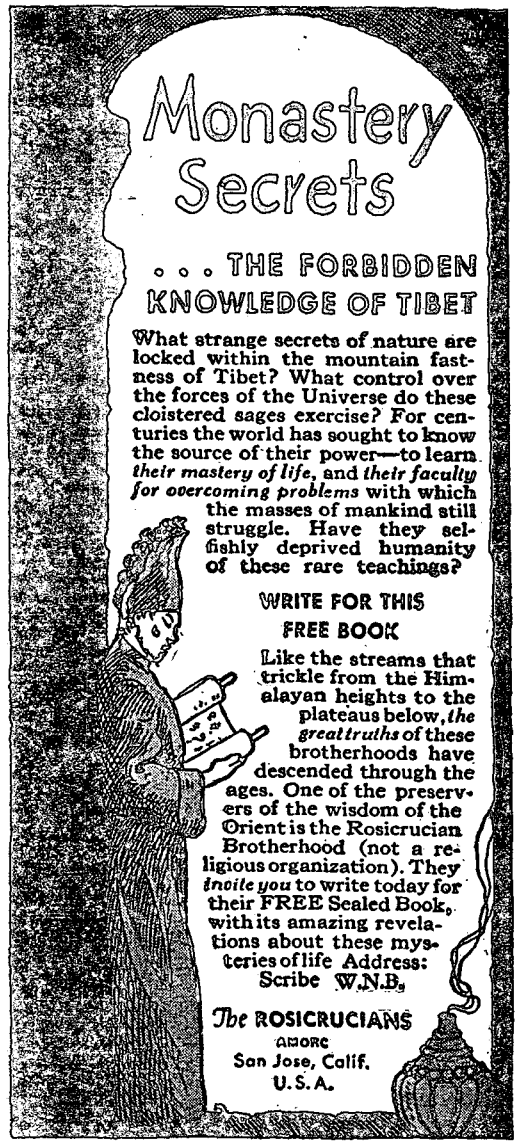
Your comments on my artwork in various fanzines, Hmmmmm. . . . not exactly encouraging I must admit, but it is possibly nothing more than surrealistic cartooning. Something new. P. W. Bridgeman said, and I quote:

"THERE IS NO ADEQUATE DEFENSE, EXCEPT STUPIDITY, AGAINST THE IMPACT OF A NEW IDEA."

Which might be added, applies to your attitude admirably.

Now let's look into the backbone of your intrepid

[*Turn page*]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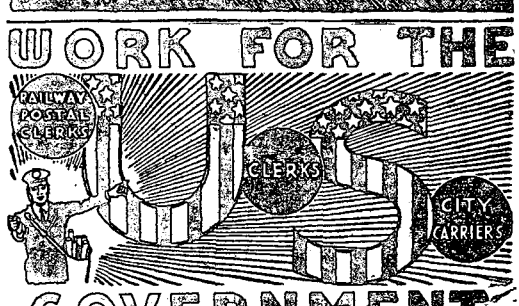
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rag, "The Ether Vibrates". Rick's letter was interesting, some very remarkable ideas he has. After seeing this letter and corresponding with him for a year or two, I've come to the irrevocable conclusion that he is a very constructive kind of lad. Wish now I'd gone to the convention in L.A. Woulda met the gent in question.—*2837 San Jose, Alameda, California.*

Dear Roscoe, the mere fact that an idea is new does not make it good—and it usually isn't new at that. As for your contention that Kuttner's fine writing does not make his yarns worth printing—well, we lack words for response.

It seems to be a currently fashionable idea that fine writing, in itself, is a horrid thing. At the same time no one wants to purchase a new car merely because it has a direct injection motor if said motor is not built correctly and put into a finished chassis.

So why read or publish a story by an author who has not mastered the principles of the langage in which he writes? Well, after editing your letter, we can understand but never sympathize.

Well, that brings us to the end of the publishable list for the present. We'll be doing business at the same old stand next time out. So long until then and thanks, all of you, once more, for the interest you have displayed.

—THE EDITOR.

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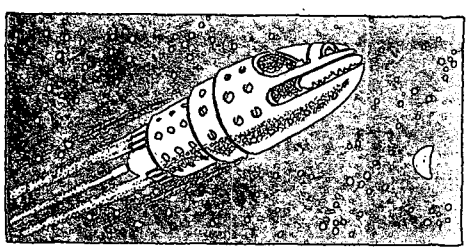
REVIEW OF THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN PUBLICATIONS

BIG news of the fanzines this issue is the first appearance of VORTEX, probably the most professional appearing amateur magazine in the stf field ever to be published. Running 79 pages exclusive of the cover—which is bizarrely excellent by the way—it could in fact give a lot of prozines occasion to sit up and take notice.

Its publishers are a group new to us—they use the imprint of FANSCI PUBAFI and the address Cowie-Kull, 70 Mirabel Avenue, San Francisco 10, California. Editors are Gordon



M. Kull and George R. Cowie. But major palms must go to whoever made up and printed this neophyte as it is far and away the most finished job of its kind we have ever seen.

The contents page is departmentalized among Fantasy, Scientifiction, Articles and Editorial Departments and the list of contributors includes both editors as well as Robert Sader, Lon Nichaelous, Ed. S. Heyman, poetaster Jim Reid and James Levelle with an article on that super robot-brain, the Eniac.

Only familiar name to show is Ziza Schramm, who shares space and picture with Jack Bertram and Jack Riggs on the how of her becoming an stfan. Illustrators include Ethel Siegel, L. Sprunkel, K. Leller and the ubiquitous Gordon Kull. Of these, Miss Siegel with her photoceramics is alone outstanding.

Unfortunately, the very physical perfection of this superfanzine operates against its effectiveness, for written matter, much of it in a dreary pseudo-Esquire manner, and illustrations, in a soft of desperate dynamic symmetry, are hopelessly amateurish by comparison.

But for all of that, THE VORTEX is a thing

[*Turn page*]

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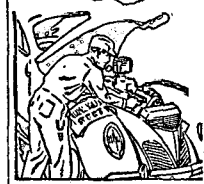

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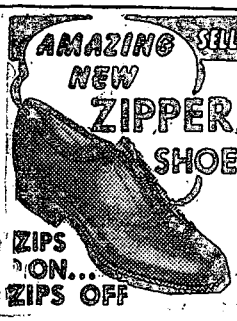

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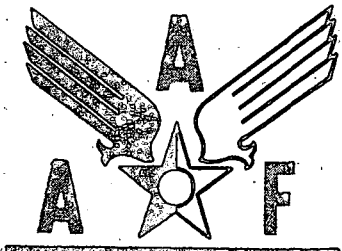

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of beauty for any fanzimaniac to behold. We shall hope for many more issues of similar quality.

V. E. Sinclair of 2210 Thomes, Cheyenne, Wyoming, writes in asking for the address of the Hadley Publishing Company, publishers of SKYLARK OF SPACE, THE TIME STREAM and THE WEAPON MAKERS by Mssrs. Smith, Taine and Van Vogt respectively. Since many other interested persons have written in with the same inquiry and doubtless many others are interested in this laudable and enterprising house, here it is—The Hadley Publishing Company, 271 Doyle Avenue, Providence 6, Rhode Island.

Whether any copies remain, we wouldn't know, but they will if anyone does.

Other news this time is not especially cheerful. FANEWS is missing, but its indefatigable editor-publisher, Walt Dunkelberger, drops us a postcard announcing that the *NEW* FANEWS is soon to appear. We await its arrival with interest.

Henry Elsner informs us via the mailman that his fanmag, the excellent SCIENTIFICTIONIST, has folded and will be resumed ultimately as strictly an all-letter zine.

For the rest, dearth of submissions has left this column in pretty sad shape. Outside of VORTEX, only five offerings rate the A-list, an all-time low in our jurisdiction, while but ten fanzines are up for B-rating.

Whether this is due to a general slump in fanzinia we do not know—or whether our honest efforts at criticism have scared away a lot of amateur publishers we do not know. It is not heartening in either case.

Looking backward to the May issue, we find eleven A-listings, all of which drew sympathetic if not necessarily laudatory comment, and fourteen votive offering on the B-list altar, of which eight survived our criticism with at least some teeth still intact.

So why be terrified? Send in a new fanzine!

Well, short as it is, here is the current A-listing:

ALCHEMIST, 1301 Ogden Street, Denver 3, Colorado. Editor, Charles Ford Hansen. Published quarterly. 15c per copy or 4 issues 50c.

An excellent issue from lindleum-block front cover by Roy Hunt to blank back page. Bob Tucker has a first-rate defense of stfandom and its worth and Harry Warner, Jr., contributes an interesting critique on non-sacrosant books about sacred subjects. Widner and Ackerman also present and in good form. An all-around smart job.

KAY-MAR TRADER, Moorhead, Minnesota. Editor, K. Martin Carlson. Published monthly. 5c per copy.

Any one looking for anything in the line of scientifiction or fantasy lore will learn how to get it in this first anniversary issue of what is rapidly becoming

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the standard work in its useful field. Well deserves its A-listing. Now keep it up there, Carlson.

ROCKETS, 469 Duane Street, Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Editor, R. L. Farnsworth. Published quarterly at $4.00 per annum. 3 years $10.00.

Mr. Farnsworth's enterprising "official publication of the United States Rocket Society, Inc," continues to be a smartly made up and informative gazette within its chosen field.

SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES, 637½ South Bixel Street, Los Angeles 14, California. Editor, Charles Burbee. Published irregularly. 10c per copy, 3 for 25c.

The house organ of the LASFS continues on its merry way, distinguished in this, its thirty-fifth issue, with articles by Van Vogt, Ackerman and Laney, Tigrina's minutes of LASFS meetings and the conclusion of a serial by F. Lee Baldwin. High spot for us was a hilarious verbatim reprint of a Sneary letter. Fun. P. S. One item in your letter column looks like a fugitive from our editorial incinerator.

VARIANT, 122 South 18th Street, Philadelphia 3, Pennsylvania. Editor, Allison Williams. Published by-monthly. 10c per copy, 12 copies $1.00.

The official magazine of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society really steps out under its new name and greatly improved format. George O. Smith, currently Philadelphiaresident, not only contributes an elaborate bit of theorizing on UTOPIA, but has upped and done

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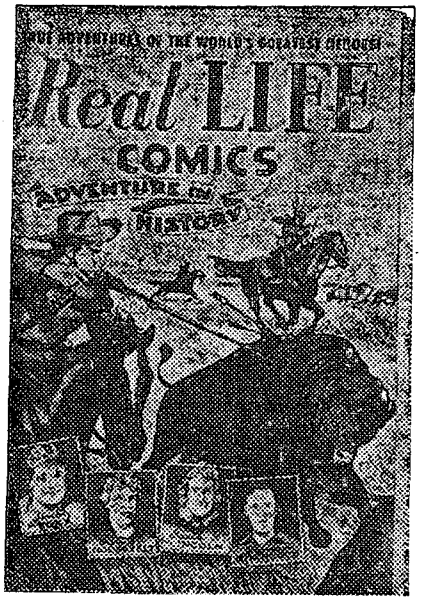

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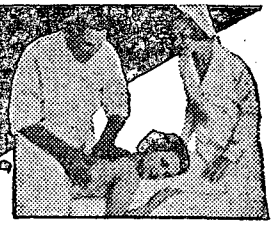

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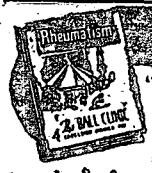

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some doodling while waiting for a phone connection by way of the cover. Jim Williams' interesting piece on LITERARY HOAXES is the other outstanding contribution to a thoroughly meritorious job. Great stuff.

And now—well, here goes for the B's, bless 'em. At least there are more of them and not all rate a downturned thumb by any means.

CAPRICE, 2315 Benjamin Street NE, Minneapolis 13, Minnesota. Editor, Redd Boggs. One shot. No price listed. Sole author of this one—three poems and a fantasy—is one Redd Boggs. A bit on the bizarre side.

FAN SPECTATOR, 20 King Street, New York 14, New York. Editor, Ron Maddox. Published bi-weekly. 5c per copy. 6 copies 25c. Competent newszine with a strong editorial lineup including Bob Strome, JoKe, Moskowitz, Alpaugh and Christensen. Has not kept up to schedule however. Let's see more issues, boys.

FANTASY TIMES, 101-02 Northern Boulevard, Corona, New York. Editor, James V. Taurasi. Published weekly. 5c per copy, 6 copies 25c. Far and away the best of the Eastern newszines. Plenty of help to a prozine editor at times when references are lacking. Thanks, Jimmy.

LUNACY, 1115 San Anselmo Avenue, San Anselmo, California. Editor, George Caldwell. Published tri-monthly (whatever that is!). No price listed. If the boys would lay off sub-sophomoric by-lines like "Abdullah U. Guesswho" and "Querty U. Iop" this might rate more serious consideration. Probably a lot more amusing to its creators than to anyone else.

PSFS NEWS, 1366 East Columbia Avenue, Philadelphia 25, Pennsylvania. Editors, Robert A. Madle and Jack Agnew. Published bi-weekly. 5c per copy, 6 copies 25c. How good can a club-organ get in this format?

SNIX, P. O. Box No. 6, Helena, Montana. Editor, Walter A. Coslet. Published irregularly. 10c per issue, 4 issues, 25c. A heck of a valuable job, which lists among its other assets all prozine stories published in 1946 complete with titles, names of authors, illustrators and magazines in which they appeared. Do this for us every year, will you, Walt? We're keeping it handy.

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SPACEWARP, 2120 Bay Street, Saginaw, Michigan. Editor, A. H. Rapp. Published irregularly. 10c per copy. $1.00 per year. Guess that means it's a monthly, no? This mag can only go in one direction—UP—so perhaps there is hope.

'TATOR, P. O. Box No. 6, Helena, Montana. Editor, Walter A. Coslet. Published irregularly. 2 copies 5c. And almost worth every penny of it. At that the author's comments on pastf classics have their points. His dreams, however, we can cheerfully do without.

2000 A. D., 428 *Main Street, El Segundo, California.* Editor, Rex E. Ward. Published bi-monthly or quarterly. 10c per copy, 3 copies 25c, 15 copies $1.00. An excellent new fanzine—but oh, that artwork. Would have rated the A-list in a walk with better all-around appearance. As it is, Ward, Blaine Desmond, Arnold Wyatt, Joe Kennedy and others have come in with a good job, nicely balanced between fact and fantasy. Get it up there, boys.

TYMPANY, 2215 Benjamin Street NE, Minneapolis 13, Minnesota. Editors, R. L. Stein and Redd Boggs. Published bi-weekly. 5c per copy, 6 copies 25c, 13 copies 50c. Reasonably live comment on stf doings. Hope the boys mag a go of it.

Well, that as the boys say is it. How about giving us a few more to chew on next time around? We'll be waiting for them.

—THE EDITOR.

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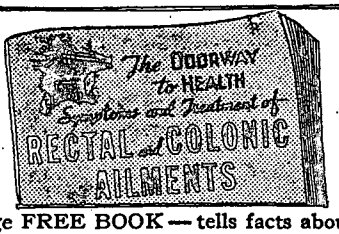

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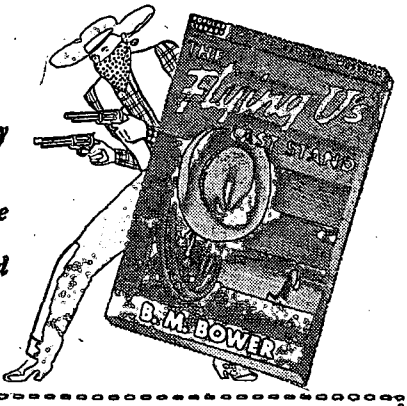

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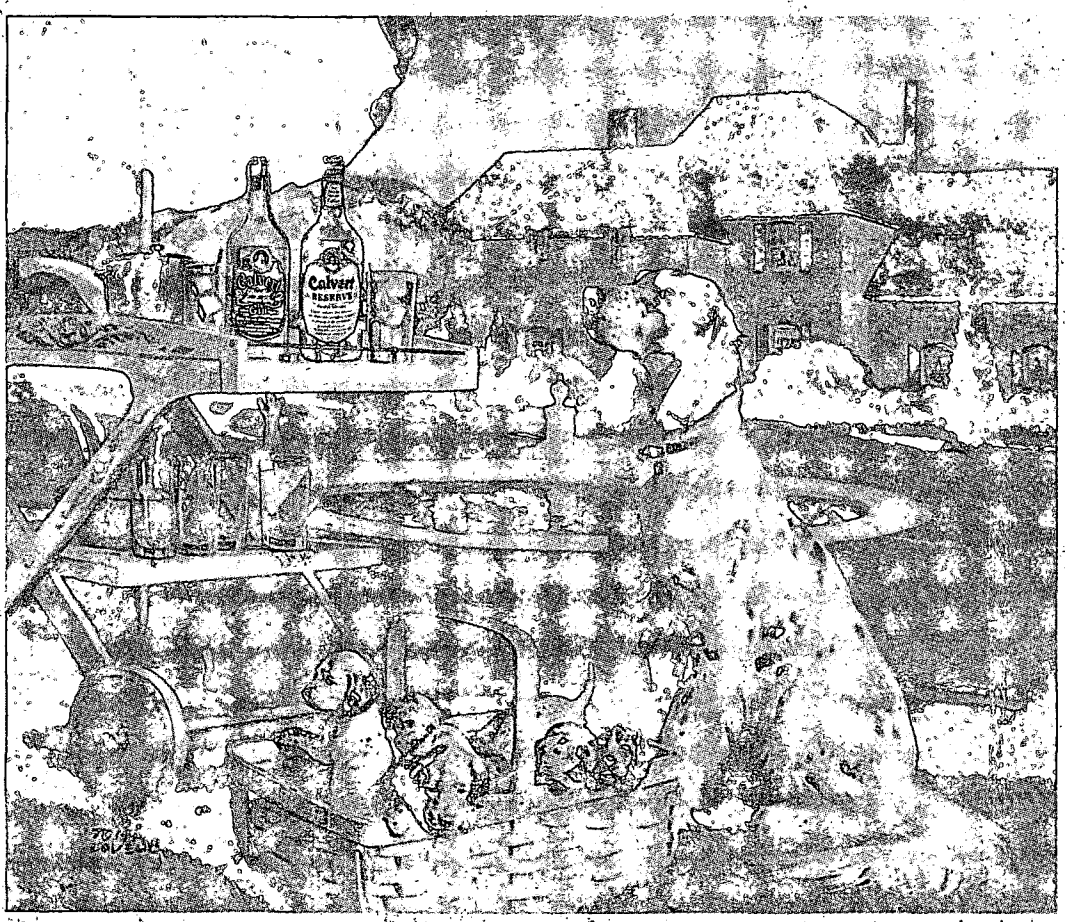

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